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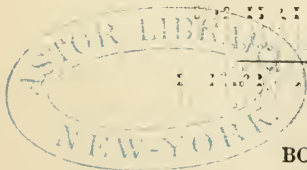
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES.

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BY JARED SPARKS.

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VOL. VI.



BOSTON,

PUBLISHED BY D. REED, 81 WASHINGTON STREET.

1826.

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SELECTION  
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OF

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## JEREMY TAYLOR

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AMONG those, who have raised themselves from obscurity to eminence by the force of their own genius and character, there are few more illustrious examples than JEREMY TAYLOR. He was the son of a barber, and born in Cambridge. The date of his birth is not recorded, but he was baptised on the 15th of August, 1613. Hardly a fact is known of his early life, except that he attended a Grammar School in Cambridge, and at the age of thirteen was admitted to Caius College, in the University of that place. He was entered as a sizer, or servitor, in which capacity he was enabled, by his personal services, to diminish the expenses incident to an education at the University. His biographers mention no other event in his life, till he took his Bachelor's degree in the year 1630. Bishop Rust says, that immediately after he was graduated he was chosen fellow, but this has been denied on the ground, that the college books of that day contain no such record. He remained at the University, however, as a student in Theology, and was admitted to orders in the Church before he was twenty one years old.

About this time he was invited to London, by his friend Mr Risen, to supply his place as a temporary lecturer in St Paul's Cathedral, where he acquitted himself with an ability so much above his years, that his fame reached the ears of Laud, at that time Archbishop of Canterbury. By his command Taylor preached before him at Lambeth, and so much was the archbishop pleased with his performance, and his manners, that he resolved to aid him in the prosecution of his studies. Through the special influence of Laud, he was preferred to a fellowship at All Souls College, in the University of Oxford. This was not done without some delay, for the nomination of Laud, although approved by a majority of the electors, was resisted by Sheldon the warden, without whose consent the choice could not be effected. No election accordingly took place, and in such a case, by the regulations of the college, the appointment devolved on the archbishop, who, in January, 1636, established Taylor in the situation by his sole authority.

Enjoying now abundance of leisure, and all the facility for successful study, he applied himself with zeal to his favourite pursuits. To this period of his life, we may chiefly refer those varied and extensive acquisitions, particularly in the ancient authors, which he employed with so much exuberance to illustrate and adorn his future writings. During his residence at Oxford, a report was industriously circulated, that he was inclining to the Romish faith. There seems to

have been no other ground for this report, than his fondness for reading the early fathers, and the polemical divines of that church; but it was likely to operate so much to his injury, that he took some pains to confute it. While at Oxford he preached before the University a public discourse, on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason, which was the first of his performances that was published. This is not equal in point of merit to his later writings, yet it contains evidences of the same powerful and fertile mind, and is marked with some of his peculiarities.

By the dedication to this discourse, it appears, that Taylor was, at the time of preaching it, chaplain to the archbishop, and he was shortly after made chaplain in ordinary to the king. In the year 1638, we also find him settled in the rectory of Uppingham, on the presentation of the Bishop of London. The duties of these several appointments must have interfered with his studies at Oxford. In 1639, being then twenty five years old, he married at Uppingham, and resigned his fellowship in the University. He now took up his abode amidst the scenes of his parochial labours, and much is said in commendation of the fidelity and zeal, with which he discharged all the duties of his sacred office. Notwithstanding his passion for knowledge, and his studious habits, he was assiduous in ministering to the spiritual wants and temporal comforts of his parishioners. In this respect there seems to have been a close resemblance between him and Dr Priestley.

The period of his residence at Uppingham was apparently a tranquil and happy one. He wrote there his learned treatise in *Defence of Episcopacy*, which was published by command of the king. But he was destined soon to receive his full share of the troubles of the times. The affairs of Charles the First were approaching a crisis, which left little to sustain the hopes of the adherents to his cause. In quality of chaplain to the king, Taylor was called on to join the army. He left Uppingham in 1642, to which place he never again returned, as his rectory was sequestered; and we hear little more of him till about three years afterward, when he had retired to Wales. Anthony Wood says, that he was in the mean time at Oxford, with the king, where he received by royal mandate a doctor's degree, in company with several other persons, whom the king was pleased to honour with these cheap rewards, since he had none more substantial in his power. In the midst of these commotions he must have found leisure, for he wrote his *Apology for a Liturgy*, a laboured and very learned work, designed as a reply to the Presbyterian *Directory*, then recently published. Heber infers, from what he thinks good testimony, that Taylor was taken prisoner in the battle of Cardigan, on the 4th of February, 1644. Be this as it may, he was residing in Wales soon after that date, and employed as teacher of a school, in company with a Mr Wyatt. He assisted Wyatt in publishing a

Grammar, for which he wrote a dedication, but neither the success nor duration of the school is known.

In Wales he was fortunate in becoming acquainted with Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery, who resided at Golden Grove, Caermarthenshire. For the liberality and kindness of this gentleman, and his wife, the Countess of Carbery, he testifies on many occasions his warmest gratitude. He became a regular preacher at Golden Grove, and received a stipend from his worthy and generous patron. His greatest work, the *Liberty of Prophesying*, was written at this time, and published in 1647. In his dedication of this work to Lord Hatton, from whom he had received many tokens of kindness at Uppingham, he hints at the calamities to which he had been exposed. These are his words. "In this great storm, which hath dashed the vessel of the church all in pieces, I have been cast upon the coast of Wales, and in a little boat thought to have enjoyed that rest and quietness, which in England in a greater I could not hope for. Here I cast anchor, and thinking to ride safely, the storm followed me with so impetuous violence, that it broke a cable, and I lost my anchor; and here again I was exposed to the mercy of the sea, and the gentleness of an element, that could neither distinguish things nor reasons. And but that he, who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of the waves, and the madness of the people, had provided a plank for me, I had been lost to all the opportunities of content or study. But I know not

whether I have been more preferred by the courtesies of my friends, or the gentleness and mercies of a noble enemy. And now, since I have come ashore, I have been gathering a few sticks to warm me, a few books to entertain my thoughts, and divert them from the perpetual meditation of my private troubles, and the public dyscrasy."

The causes, which induced him to undertake the Liberty of Propheying, and the character of that remarkable performance, may be understood from his own account of it, written ten years after its first publication.

"Though I have great reason," he says, "to adore the goodness of God in giving that success to my labours, that I am also obliged to the kindness of men for their friendly acceptance of them, yet when a persecution did arise against the church of England, and that I intended to make a defensative for my brethren and myself, by pleading for liberty of our consciences to persevere in that profession, which was warranted by all the laws of God and our superiors, some men were angry, and would not be safe that way, because I had made the roof of the sanctuary so wide, that more might be sheltered under it, than they had a mind should be saved harmless. Men would be safe alone, or not at all, supposing their truth and good cause was warranty enough to preserve itself, and they thought true; it was indeed warranty enough against persecution, if men had believed it to be truth; but because we had

fallen under the power of our worst enemies, for brethren turned enemies are ever the most implacable, they looked upon us as men in mispersuasion and error ; and therefore I was to defend our persons, that whether our cause were right or wrong, for it would be supposed wrong, yet we might be permitted in liberty and impunity. But then the consequent would be this, that if we, when we were supposed to be in error, were yet to be indemnified, then others, also, whom we thought as ill of, were to rejoice in the same freedom, because this equality was the great instrument of justice, and if we would not do to others as we desired should be done to us, we were no more to pretend religion, because we destroy the law and the prophets. Of this some men were impatient, and they would have all the world spare them, and yet they would spare nobody. But because this is too unreasonable, I need no excuse for my speaking to other purposes. Others complained that it would have evil effects, and all heresies would enter at the gate of toleration ; and because I know that they would crowd and throng in as far as they could, I placed such guards and restraints there, as might keep out all unreasonable pretenders ; allowing none to enter here, that speak against the Apostles' Creed, or weakened the hands of government, or were enemies to good life.”\*

\* See the Epistle Dedicatory, prefixed to the “ Collection of Polemical and Moral Discourses, by Jeremy Taylor.” This is a folio volume, and was printed in 1657. It contains the Liberty of

Taylor was prompted to write the *Liberty of Prophe-  
sy* by the state of the times. The political and  
ecclesiastical affairs of the nation were intimately blend-  
ed, and the spirit of civil discord, which raged so vio-  
lently, infused itself into the religious principles and  
feelings of the parties ; the regular clergy were expel-  
led from their benefices, and left destitute of the means  
of support ; and persecution, if not deemed a virtue,  
was hardly felt to be a crime. At this crisis Taylor  
came forward as a decided champion of toleration, and  
he pleaded the cause of charity and forbearance, in  
the matter of religious opinion, with a boldness, elo-  
quence, power, and learning, altogether unparallelled  
at that time. No person had ever ventured to speak so  
plainly on those topics, and no one was better qualified  
by his talents, his attainments, and the benevolence of  
his temper, to discuss them in a profound and judicious  
manner. There is an excess of learning, in this per-  
formance, and too much deference paid to the notions  
of ancient fathers, but these were faults of the age, and  
extraneous to the author's forcible arguments, his win-  
ning eloquence, and christian spirit. Had he produced  
no other work than this, it would have placed him in  
the rank of the first of scholars and of Christians.

Taylor was now quietly settled in Wales, and he  
regularly performed the office of clergyman in the  
family at Golden Grove. His industry and application

*Prophe-  
sy*, and several other treatises, which had been previous-  
ly published at different times in a separate form.



to study were unabating. His next publication was the *Great Exemplar*, a work of a doctrinal, practical, and devotional character. It contains a narrative of the life of Christ, interspersed with dissertations on various important topics in theology and ethics, and with prayers suited to the subjects of the different chapters. The author's usually serious frame of mind, his devotional temper, and wide range of learning are conspicuous throughout this treatise.

In the year 1650, the *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* came out, a work which has been as often reprinted, and as much read, as almost any other of a religious character in the English language. It still holds its popularity, and will doubtless continue to be a treasure in the cabinets of the devout, while the language shall last. The *Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying* appeared soon after, written much in the same spirit as the *Holy Living*, but with a greater display of learning, with more of the richness and beauty of composition, and of the peculiar characteristics of Taylor's genius and style. Quick in succession were published his *Sermons*, which seem to have been a selection from those delivered in the ordinary course of his preaching at Golden Grove. These *Sermons* are too well known to need comment. Having been written without much premeditation, or labour of study, they exhibit more accurately than any other of Taylor's writings, the features and resources of his mind; and it is difficult for a reader to decide at which he is most astonished,

the copiousness of topics and language, the flow of eloquence and profusion of poetical imagery, or the extent, variety, and readiness of the author's learning. There is an inequality in different parts, as would be natural in compositions of this nature; the learning sometimes approaches to pedantry, but this was consistent with the times; the strength and pertinency of thought are not always equally sustained, but in every discourse passages are found, which show a rare union of eloquence and poetry, of a fertile and subdued imagination, with a warm and cheerful piety, of a deep insight into human nature, with a wide practical observation of the habits, manners, and propensities of mankind. If Taylor was less cogent than Barrow, in the exercise and deductions of the reasoning powers, or less sententious and acute than the ever memorable Hales, he yielded to no one in the brilliancy of an exhaustless genius, the fervour of devotion, and the treasures of a well stored mind.

In the year 1655, was published the little treatise, entitled the *Guide to Infant Devotion, or the Golden Grove*, which contains a catechism, a short commentary on the Apostles' Creed, rules of Christian practice, and devotional exercises, the whole designed chiefly for the religious instruction of young people. It has passed through numerous editions, and been used as a daily manual by the pious of all ages, and of different sects. At the end of this treatise are specimens of the author's poetry, called *Festival Hymns*, and the only productions of his muse in measure and rhyme, it is believed, which

have been preserved. They are jejune, prosaic, and full of the conceits peculiar to the time in which he wrote. Of Taylor it may indeed be said, that there never was a more captivating poet in prose, and seldom a feebler one in verse.

It was near the end of the year 1654, when fresh excitements began to break out among the royalists, and Cromwell deemed it necessary to exercise a double vigilance over them, and resort to decisive measures to suppress the efforts of the disaffected. Several persons were imprisoned, and Taylor among others. Not that he had taken an active part in any particular movements, which gave offence, but the loyalty of his sentiments, and the independence of his character were too well known, to suffer a person of his talents and influence to remain at liberty without suspicion. He was for some time confined in Chepstow Castle. He published his *Unum Necessarium*, or the *Doctrine and Practice of Repentance*, in the year 1655, but whether previously to his imprisonment does not appear. While in prison he had a correspondence on the subject of this work with the Bishop of Rochester, who had taken serious exception to some of its doctrines. This treatise indeed led him into a very warm controversy with the bishop, and with other persons, which continued for two or three years, and which, before it was done, betrayed even the mild and judicious Taylor into a heat of temper and feeling, not to be witnessed in any other part of his writings. The point in dispute was

original sin, on which doctrine Taylor's opponents insisted that he was heterodox, and had strayed far from the folds of the true church. Taylor argued from Scripture, from common sense, and from the opinions of early fathers, to prove that men could be accountable only for their own sins, and that sin was an actual transgression, and not an inheritance entailed on all the human race by Adam. This was called heresy, the pillars of the church were said to be in danger, and Taylor was assailed by a clamour, which inflicted a severe trial on his patience and equanimity, but which, so far from convincing him of error, strengthened his first impressions, in proportion as it drove him to examine more deeply and thoroughly into the subject.

How long he was confined a prisoner in Chepstow Castle is not certain. He was released, however, as early as the end of the year 1656, for in February of the next year we find him writing to a friend, that he had been visited by a recent calamity in the sudden death of two of his sons, and much sickness in his family. In the same letter he signifies his intention of going shortly to London with his third son. This purpose he soon accomplished, and never returned again to reside in Wales. His studies occupied his time and thoughts in London, and he preached there to a small congregation of royalists in a private way, but not without the risk of incurring the censure or persecution of the predominant party. One of his best performances, a *Discourse on the Nature and Offices of Friendship*,

was published at this time in connexion with several of his former works, then first collected under his supervision in one folio volume.

But Taylor was soon again to change his residence. In London he became acquainted with lord Conway, a gentleman of a frank and generous character, who invited him to go over to Ireland, and live under his patronage in that country. The proposal was made in so friendly a manner, and prospects were so favourable, that Taylor accepted the invitation and removed with his family, towards the close of the year 1657, to Portmore, in the county of Antrim, at which place was the mansion of Lord Conway. This retreat afforded every advantage for contemplation, and the pursuits of a scholar. It was called by Taylor, his "delightful recess at Portmore." Here he completed his great work, the *Ductor Dubitantium*, or *Rule of Conscience*, upon which he had been employed for many years, and which beyond doubt cost him more labour of research and thought, than any other of his productions. It is not only the largest, but the one which he evidently considered the most important, and the chief basis on which his future fame would rest. So imperfectly do men estimate the value of their own labours. If the book could be selected, which has been the least read of all Taylor's writings, it would probably be this. Indeed it has little to attract notice at the present day. The author speaks wisely and profoundly of the laws, which nature and the Scriptures lay down

as the uniting link of the social compact, and as a guide to human intercourse ; and he traces the influence of these laws on conscience with sufficient accuracy. But he was too much constrained by the trammels of the schools, although he seemed conscious of their burden, and was perpetually struggling to throw them off. Sometimes he was successful, but not always ; he entangles himself in puzzling cases of conscience, and then resorts to ingenious devices to unravel the intricate web he has woven ; he gathers up too many of the shreds of scholastic casuistry, and prescribes rules for solving difficulties, where no difficulties can reasonably exist. In short, a rule of conscience is a rule of nature, as closely entwined with our being as a sense of right and wrong, and it is idle to write books instructing men how to apply this rule on any other ground, than internal conviction of the justice and propriety of an action. In other words, it is preposterous for one man to set himself up as a guide to another's conscience, especially as he can have no foresight or experience of the infinite variety of cases, in which the mind of another may be required to decide and act.

Taylor had not been three years in Ireland, before brighter prospects broke upon him, and prepared the way for a happy change in his fortune. The condition of the Commonwealth was every day becoming more disordered, religious fanaticism grew wilder, the political fabric was shaken, and the bonds of society loosened, till at length, on the death of Cromwell, in 1658, the

nation was ready for a new revolution, and many sighed for the old order of things, as a relief from oppression and discord. When the king was restored in 1660, one of his first acts was to reward those, who, in defiance of every danger, had stood firm in the ranks of loyalty. True to his early and his continued purpose, Taylor repaired to London, and was among those, who first assembled around the king to confirm and support his cause by their united counsels. In filling up the numerous vacancies, which had occurred in the church during the interregnum, Taylor was made bishop of Down and Conner in Ireland. Several other bishops were also appointed to fill vacant sees in that country, all of whom, together with Taylor, were consecrated on the same day in the Cathedral of St Patrick. The discourse on the occasion was preached by Taylor.

Having now an important station to maintain, and numerous disorders to rectify in his diocess, our bishop relaxed in some degree from his former intensesness of study. He was, moreover, chosen vice chancellor of the University of Dublin. On the opening of the Irish Parliament in 1661, he preached a sermon before that body. Other discourses were preached by him from time to time, on important occasions, some of which are inserted in the volumes of his published sermons. By appointment of the Irish bishops, he also wrote and published a *Dissuasive from Popery*, adapted to the state of Ireland at that time. But his chief cares were bestowed on the interests and concerns of his diocess,

visiting its different parts, preaching to the people, and giving counsel to the clergy. He was liberal in bestowing his means for proper objects; the poor he assisted with an open hand; and he was not more exemplary in his piety and christian zeal, than in his deeds of charity and love. After a short illness of ten days, this man of extraordinary gifts and attainments finished his earthly course, on the 13th of August, 1667, at the age of fifty six years. A very excellent funeral sermon was preached by Dr Rust, dean of Conner, in which the character of Bishop Taylor is skilfully drawn, and on which his biographers have relied for some of the main incidents of his life.

Jeremy Taylor's works have been printed in various forms, and at different times; but the only complete edition is that published in 1822, by Mr Reginald Heber, in fifteen octavo volumes. A treatise not mentioned in the course of the preceding remarks, was published seven years after Taylor's death, entitled *Contemplations on Man*. This was left by him ready for the press, and has gone through many separate editions, though it possesses neither the vigour nor the richness of many of his other compositions. A tract, called a *Discourse of Artificial Handsomeness*, has usually been ascribed to him, and printed among his works, but Mr Heber has brought together testimony enough to prove, that he never could have written it. A life of Jeremy Taylor has recently been written by Mr Bonney, and published in one volume. This con-



tains at the end a list of all the author's works, with the date of the first publication of each treatise. A more full and elaborate account of his life and writings is from the pen of Mr Heber, and prefixed to the complete edition of Jeremy Taylor's Works above mentioned. We shall close this short sketch with the following critical remarks by Mr Heber.

---

‘ Of the broader and more general lines of Taylor's literary character, a very few observations may be sufficient. The greatness of his attainments, and the powers of his mind, are evident in all his writings, and to the least attentive of his readers. It is hard to point out a branch of learning, or of scientific pursuit, to which he does not occasionally allude ; or any author of eminence, either ancient or modern, with whom he does not evince himself acquainted. And it is certain, that as very few other writers have equal riches to display, so he is apt to display his stores with a lavish exuberance, which the severer taste of Hooker or of Barrow would have condemned as ostentatious, or rejected as cumbersome. Yet he is far from a mere reporter of other men's arguments,—a textuary of fathers and schoolmen,—who resigns his reason into the hands of his predecessors, and who employs no other instrument for convincing their readers, than a lengthened string of authorities. His familiarity with the stores of ancient and modern literature, is employed to illustrate more

frequently than to establish his positions; and may be traced, not so much in direct citation, (though of this, too, there is, perhaps, more than sufficient,) as in the abundance of his allusions, the character of his imagery, and the occurrence of terms of foreign derivation, or employed in a foreign and unusual meaning.

‘It is thus that he more than once refers to obscure stories in ancient writers, as if they were, of necessity, as familiar to all his readers as himself; that he talks of “poor Attilius Ariola,” or “the Lybian lion,” that “brake loose into his wilderness, and killed two Roman boys;” as if the accidents of which he is speaking had occurred in London a few weeks before. It is thus that, in warning an English (or a Welsh) auditory, against the brief term of mortal luxury, he enumerates a long list of ancient dainties, and talks of “the condited bellies of the scarus,” and “drinking of healths by the numeral letters of Philenium’s name.” It is thus that one of his strangest and harshest similes, where he compares an ill-sorted marriage to “going to bed with a dragon,” is the suggestion of a mind familiar with those *Lamiae* with female faces and extremities like a serpent, of whose enticements strange stories are told in the old dæmonologies. And thus that he speaks of the “justice,” instead of the “juice” of fishes; of an “excellent” pain; of the Gospel being preached, not “to the common people,” but to “idiots;” and of “serpents,” (meaning “creeping things,”) devouring our bodies in the grave. It is this which gives to many

of his most striking passages the air of translations, and which, in fact, may well lead us to believe, that some of them are indeed the selected members of different and disjointed classics.

‘ On the other hand, few circumstances can be named, which so greatly contribute to the richness of his matter, the vivacity of his style, and the harmony of his language, as those copious drafts on all which is wise, or beautiful, or extraordinary, in ancient writers or in foreign tongues ; and the very singularity and hazard of his phrases has not unfrequently a peculiar charm, which the observers of a tamer and more ordinary diction can never hope to inspire. One of these archaisms, and a very graceful one, is the introduction of the comparative degree, simply and without its contrasted quantity, of which he has made a very frequent use, but which he has never employed without producing an effect of striking beauty. Thus, he tells us “of a *more* healthy sorrow ;” of “the air’s *looser* garment,” or the *wilder* fringes of the fire ;” which, though in a style purely English, they would be probably replaced by positive or superlative epithets, could hardly suffer this change, without a considerable detraction from the spirit and raciness of the sentence. The same observation may apply to the use of “*prevaricate*,” in an active sense ; to “the ‘*temeration*’ of ruder handling ;” and to many similar expressions, which, if unusual, are at least expressive and sonorous, and which could hardly be replaced by the corresponding vernacular phrases,

without a loss of brevity or beauty. Of such expressions as these, it is only necessary to observe, that their use, to be effectual or allowable, should be more discreet, perhaps, and infrequent, than is the case in the works of Taylor.

‘I have already noticed the familiarity which he himself displays, and which he apparently expected to find, in an almost equal degree, in his readers or hearers. with the facts of history, the opinions of philosophy, the productions of distant climates, and the customs of distant nations. Nor, in the allusions or examples which he extracts from such sources, is he always attentive to the weight of authority, or the probability of the fact alleged. The age, indeed, in which he lived, was, in many respects, a credulous one. The discoveries, which had been made by the enterprise of travellers, and the unskilful, and as yet immature efforts of the new philosophy, had extended the knowledge of mankind just far enough to make them know that much yet remained uncertain, and that many things were true, which their fathers had held for impossible. Such absence of skepticism is, of all states of the human mind, most favourable to the increase of knowledge; but for the preservation of truths already acquired, and the needful separation of truth from falsehood, it is necessary to receive the testimony of men, however positive, with more of doubt than Boyle, Wilkins, or even Bacon, appear to have been accustomed to exercise.

‘But Taylor was anything rather than a critical inquirer into facts, (however strange,) of history or philosophy. If such alleged facts suited his purpose, he received them without examination, and retained them without scruple; and we therefore read, in his works, of such doubtful or incredible examples, as that of a single city containing fifteen millions of inhabitants; of the Neapolitan Manna, which failed as soon as it was subjected to a tax; and of the monument “nine furlongs” high, which was erected by Ninus, the Assyrian. Nor, in his illustrations, even where they refer to matters of daily observation, or of undoubted truth, is he always attentive to accuracy.

“When men sell a mule, he tells us, “they speak of the horse that begat him, not of the ass that bore him.” It is singular, that he should forget that, of mules, the ass is always the father. What follows is still more extraordinary, inasmuch as it shows a forgetfulness of the circumstances of two of the most illustrious events in the Old Testament. “We should fight,” says he, “as Gideon did, with three hundred hardy brave fellows, that would stand against all violence, rather than to make a noise with ram’s horns and broken pitchers, like the men at the siege of Jericho.” Had he thought twice, he must have recollected, that “making a noise” was at least one principal part of the service required from Gideon’s troops, and that the “broken pitchers” were their property alone, and a circumstance of which the narrative of the siege of

Jericho affords not the least mention. An occasional occurrence of such errors is indeed unavoidable ; and, irrelevant as some of his illustrations are, and uncertain as may be the truth of others, there is none, perhaps, of his readers who would wish those illustrations fewer, to which his works owe so much of their force, their impressiveness, and their entertainment. As a reasoner, I do not think him matchless. He is, indeed, always acute, and, in practical questions, almost always sensible. His knowledge was so vast, that on every point of discussion he set out with great advantage, as being familiar with all the necessary preliminaries of the question, and with every ground or argument, which had been elicited on either side by former controversies. But his own understanding was rather inventive than critical. He never failed to find a plausible argument for any opinion, which he himself entertained ; he was as ready with plausible objections to every argument, which might be advanced by his adversaries ; and he was completely acquainted with the whole detail of controversial attack and defence, and of every weapon of eloquence, irony, or sarcasm, which was most proper to persuade or to silence. But his own views were sometimes indistinct, and often hasty. His opinions, therefore, though always honest and ardent, he had sometimes occasion, in the course of his life, to change ; and instances have been already pointed out, not only where his reasoning is inconclusive, but were positions, ardently maintained in some of his writings, are doubted

or denied in others. But it should be remembered how much he wrote during a life in itself not long, and, in its circumstances, by no means favourable to active research or calm reasoning. Nor can it be a subject of surprise, that a poor and oppressed man should be sometimes hurried too far in opposition to his persecutors, or that one who had so little leisure for the correction of his works, should occasionally be found to contradict or repeat himself.

‘I have already had occasion to point out the versatility of his talents, which, though uniformly exerted on subjects appropriate to his profession, are distinguished, where such weapons are needed, by irony and caustic humour, as well as by those milder and sublimer beauties of style and sentiment, which are his more familiar and distinguishing characteristics. Yet to such weapons he has never recourse wantonly or rashly. Nor do I recollect any instance, in which he has employed them in the cause of private or personal, or even polemical hostility, or any occasion where their fullest severity was not justified and called for by crimes, by cruelty, by interested superstition, or base and sordid hypocrisy. His satire was always kept in check by the depth and fervour of his religious feelings, his charity, and his humility. It is on devotional and moral subjects, however, that the peculiar character of his mind is most, and most successfully developed. To this service he devotes his most glowing language ; to this his aptest illustrations ; his thoughts, and his words,

at once burst into a flame, when touched by the coals of this altar ; and whether he describes the duties, or dangers, or hopes of man, or the mercy, power, and justice of the Most High ; whether he exhorts or instructs his brethren, or offers up his supplications in their behalf to the common Father of all,—his conceptions and his expressions belong to the loftiest and most sacred description of poetry, of which they only want, what they cannot be said to need, the name and the metrical arrangement.

‘ It is this distinctive excellence, still more than the other qualifications of learning and logical acuteness, which has placed him, even in that age of gigantic talent, on an eminence superior to any of his immediate cotemporaries ; which has exempted him from the comparative neglect, into which the dry and repulsive learning of Andrews and Sanderson has fallen ;—which has left behind the acuteness of Hales, and the imaginative and copious eloquence of Bishop Hall, at a distance hardly less than the cold elegance of Clarke, and the dull good sense of Tillotson ; and has seated him, by the almost unanimous estimate of posterity, on the same lofty elevation of Hooker and with Barrow.

‘ Of such a triumvirate, who shall settle the precedence ? Yet it may, perhaps, be not far from the truth, to observe, that Hooker claims the foremost rank in sustained and classic dignity of style, in political and pragmatistical wisdom ; that to Barrow the praise must



be assigned of the closest and the clearest views, and of a taste the most controlled and chastened ; but that in imagination, in interest, in that which more properly and exclusively deserves the name of genius, Taylor is to be placed before either. The first awes most, the second convinces most, the third persuades and delights the most ; and, (according to the decision of one, whose own rank among the ornaments of English literature yet remains to be determined by posterity,) Hooker is the object of our reverence, Barrow of our admiration, and Jeremy Taylor of our love.'

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ON THE

# DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONG CHRISTIANS.

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FROM THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING.

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THE infinite variety of opinions in matters of religion, as they have troubled Christendom with interests, factions, and partialities ; so have they caused great divisions of the heart, and variety of thoughts and designs amongst pious and prudent men. For they all, seeing the inconveniences which the disunion of persuasions and opinions have produced directly or accidentally, have thought themselves obliged to stop this inundation of mischiefs, and have made attempts accordingly. But it hath happened to most of them, as to a mistaken physician, who gives excellent physic but misapplies it, and so misses of his cure ; so have these men, their attempts have therefore been ineffectual ; for they put their help to a wrong part, or they have endeavoured to cure the symptoms, and have let the

disease alone till it seemed incurable. Some have endeavoured to re-unite these factions by propounding such a guide, which they were all bound to follow; hoping that the unity of a guide would have persuaded unity of minds; but who this guide should be at last became such a question, that it was made part of the fire that was to be quenched; so far was it from extinguishing any part of the flame.

Others thought of a rule, and this must be the means of union, or nothing could do it. But supposing all the world had been agreed of this rule, yet the interpretation of it was so full of variety, that this also became part of the disease, for which the cure was pretended. All men resolved upon this, that though they yet had not hit upon the right, yet some way must be thought upon to reconcile differences in opinion; thinking so long as this variety should last, Christ's kingdom was not advanced, and the work of the Gospel went on but slowly. Few men in the mean time considered, that so long as men had such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers, and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light, and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind. And what is impossible to be done, it is not necessary it should be done; and therefore, although variety of opinions was impossible to be cured, and they who attempted it, did like him who claps his shoulder to the ground to stop an earthquake, yet the inconveniences arising from it

might possibly be cured, not by uniting their beliefs, that was to be despaired of, but by curing that which caused these mischiefs and accidental inconveniences of their disagreeings. For although these inconveniences, which every man sees and feels were consequent to this diversity of persuasions, yet it was but accidentally and by chance ; inasmuch as we see that in many things, and they of great concernment, men allow to themselves and to each other a liberty of disagreeing, and no hurt neither. And, certainly, if diversity of opinions were of itself the cause of mischiefs, it would be so ever, that is, regularly and universally ; but that we see it is not, for there are disputes in Christendom concerning matters of greater concernment, than most of those opinions that distinguish sects, and make factions ; and yet because men are permitted to differ in those great matters, such evils are not consequent to such differences, as are to the uncharitable managing of smaller and more inconsiderable questions.

It is of greater consequence to believe right, in the question of the validity or invalidity of a death bed repentance, than to believe aright in the question of purgatory, and the consequences of the doctrine of predetermination are of deeper and more material consideration, than the products of the belief of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of private masses ; and yet these great concernments, where a Liberty of Prophesying in these questions hath been permitted, hath made no distinct communion, no sects of Christians, and the

others have, and so have these too in those places where they have peremptorily been determined on either side. Since then if men are quiet and charitable in some disagreements, that then and there the inconvenience ceases, if they were so in all others where lawfully they might, (and they may in most,) Christendom should be no longer rent in pieces, but would be reintegrated in a new Pentecost; and although the Spirit of God did rest upon us in divided tongues, yet so long as those tongues were of fire not to kindle strife, but to warm our affections, and inflame our charities, we should find that this variety of opinions, in several persons, would be looked upon as an argument only of diversity of operations, while the Spirit is the same; and that another man believes not so well as I, is only an argument that I have a better and a clearer illumination than he, that I have a better gift than he, received a special grace and favour, and excel him in this, and am perhaps excelled by him in many more. And if we all impartially endeavour to find a truth, since this endeavour and search only is in our power, that we shall find it being *ab extra*, a gift and an assistance extrinsical, I can see no reason why this pious endeavour to find out truth, shall not be of more force to unite us in the bonds of charity, than the misery in missing it shall be to disunite us. So that since a union of persuasion is impossible to be attained, if we would attempt the cure by such remedies as are apt to enkindle and increase charity, I am confident we might

see a blessed peace would be the reward and crown of such endeavours.

But men are nowadays, and indeed always have been, since the expiration of the first blessed ages of Christianity, so in love with their own fancies and opinions, as to think faith and all Christendom is concerned in their support and maintenance, and whoever is not so fond and does not dandle them like themselves, it grows up to a quarrel, which because it is in *materiâ theologiæ*, or relates to theology, is made a quarrel in religion, and God is entitled to it; and then if you are once thought an enemy to God, it is our duty to persecute you even to death; we do God good service in it; when, if we should examine the matter rightly, the question is either in *materiâ non revelata*, or *minus evidenti*, or *non necessariâ*, either it is not revealed, or not so clearly, but that wise and honest men may be of different minds, or else it is not of the foundation of faith, but a remote superstructure, or else of mere speculation, or perhaps, when all comes to all, it is a false opinion, or a matter of human interest, that we have so zealously contended for; for to one of these heads most of the disputes of Christendom may be reduced; so that I believe the present factions, or the most are from the same cause, which St Paul observed in the Corinthian schism, "When there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal?"

It is not the differing opinions, that is the cause of the present ruptures, but want of charity ; it is not the variety of understandings, but the disunion of wills and affections ; it is not the several principles, but the several ends that cause our miseries ; our opinions commence, and are upheld, according as our turns are served and our interests are preserved, and there is no cure for us, but piety and charity. A holy life will make our belief holy, if we consult not humanity and its imperfections in the choice of our religion, but search for truth without designs, save only of acquiring heaven, and then be as careful to preserve charity, as we were to get a point of faith ; I am much persuaded we should find out more truths by this means or however, which is the main of all, we shall be secured though we miss them ; and then we are well enough.

For if it be evinced, that one heaven shall hold men of several opinions, if the unity of faith be not destroyed by that which men call differing religions, and if a unity of charity be the duty of us all, even towards persons who are not persuaded of every proposition we believe, then I would fain know to what purpose are all those stirs, and great noises in Christendom ; those names of faction, the several names of churches not distinguished by the division of kingdoms, as the church obeys the government, *ut Ecclesia sequatur Imperium*, which was the primitive rule\* and canon, but distin-

\* Optat. lib. 3.



guished by name of sects and men? These are all become instruments of hatred, thence come schisms and parting of communions, and then persecutions, and then wars and rebellion, and then the dissolutions of all friendships and societies.

All the mischiefs proceed not from this, that all men are not of one mind, for that is neither necessary nor possible, but that every opinion is made an article of faith, every article is a ground of a quarrel, every quarrel makes a faction, every faction is zealous, and all zeal pretends for God, and whatsoever is for God cannot be too much; we by this time are come to that pass, we think we love not God except we hate our brother, and we have not the virtue of religion, unless we persecute all religions but our own; for lukewarmness is so odious to God and man, that we proceeding furiously upon these mistakes, by supposing we preserve the body, we destroy the soul of religion, or by being zealous for faith, or which is all one, for that which we mistake for faith, we are cold in charity, and so lose the reward of both.

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THE  
NATURE AND EXTENT  
OF  
CHRISTIAN FAITH.

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FROM THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING.

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It is of great concernment to know the nature and integrity of faith ; for there begins our first and great mistake ; for faith, although it be of great excellency, yet when it is taken for a habit intellectual, it hath so little room and so narrow a capacity, that it cannot lodge thousands of those opinions, which pretend to be of her family.

For although it be necessary for us to believe whatsoever we know to be revealed of God ; and so every man does, that believes there is a God ; yet it is not necessary, concerning many things, to know that God hath revealed them ; that is, we may be ignorant of, or doubt concerning the propositions, and indifferently maintain either part, when the question is not concerning God's veracity, but whether God hath said so or no. That which is of the foundation of faith, that

only is necessary ; and the knowing or not knowing of that, the believing or disbelieving it, is that only which, as to the nature of the things to be believed, is an immediate and necessary order to salvation or damnation.

Now all the reason and demonstration of the world convinces us, that this foundation of faith, or the great adequate object of the faith that saves us, is that great mysteriousness of Christianity, which Christ taught with so much diligence, for the credibility of which he wrought so many miracles ; for the testimony of which the Apostles endured persecutions ; that which was a folly to the Gentiles, and a scandal to the Jews, this is that which is the object of a Christian's faith ; all other things are implicitly in the belief of the articles of God's veracity, and are not necessary in respect of the constitution of faith to be drawn out, but may there lie in the bowels of the great articles, without danger to any thing or any person, unless some other accident or circumstance makes them necessary. Now the great object, which I speak of, is Jesus Christ crucified. " I have determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ;" so said St Paul to the Church of Corinth ; this is the article upon the confession of which Christ built his Church, viz. only upon St Peter's creed, which was no more but this simple enunciation, " We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi, 19 ; and to this salvation particularly is promised, as in the case of Martha's creed, John, xi, 27. To this the

Scripture gives the greatest testimony, and to all them that confess it; “For every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God;” and “Whoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;” John iv, 2. 15. The believing this article is the end of writing the four Gospels; “For all these things are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God,” John xx, 31; and then that this is sufficient follows, “and that believing,” viz. this article, (for this was only instanced in,) “ye might have life through his name.” This is that great Article, which as to the nature of the things to be believed, is sufficient disposition to prepare a catechumen to baptism, as appears in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, whose creed was only this, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” and upon this confession, saith the story, they both went into the water, and the Ethiop was washed, and became as white as snow.

In these particular instances, there is no variety of Articles, save only that in the annexes of the several expressions, such things are expressed, as besides that Christ is come, they tell from whence, and to what purpose; and whatsoever is expressed, or is to these purposes implied, is made articulate and explicate, in the short and admirable mysterious creed of St Paul, Rom. x, 8. “This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God

hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This is the great and entire complexion of a Christian's faith, and since salvation is promised to the belief of this creed, either a snare is laid for us, with a purpose to deceive us, or else nothing is of prime and original necessity to be believed, but this, *Jesus Christ our Redeemer*; and all that which is the necessary parts, means, or main actions of working this redemption for us, and the honour for him, is in the bowels and fold of the great Article, and claims an explicit belief by the same reason, that binds us to the belief of its first complexion, without which neither the thing could be acted, nor the proposition understood.

For the act of believing propositions is not for itself, but in order to certain ends; as sermons are to good life and obedience; for, (excepting that it acknowledges God's veracity, and so is a direct act of religion,) believing a revealed proposition, hath no excellency in itself; but in order to that end for which we are instructed in such revelations. Now God's great purpose being to bring us to him by Jesus Christ, Christ is our medium to God, obedience is the medium to Christ, and faith the medium to obedience, and therefore is to have its estimate in proportion to its proper end, and those things are necessary, which necessarily promote the end, without which obedience cannot be encouraged or prudently enjoined; so that those Articles are necessary, that is, those are fundamental points, upon which we build our obedience; and as the influence of the

Article is to the persuasion or engagement of obedience, so they have their degrees of necessity.

Now all that Christ, when he preached, taught us to believe, and all that the Apostles in their Sermons propound, all aim at this, that we should acknowledge Christ for our Lawgiver and our Saviour ; so that nothing can be necessary by a prime necessity to be believed explicitly, but such things which are therefore parts of the great Article, because they either encourage our services, or oblige them, such as declare Christ's greatness in himself, or his goodness to us ; so that although we must neither deny nor doubt of any thing, which we know our great Master hath taught us. Yet salvation is in special and by name annexed to the belief of those Articles only, which have in them the indearments of our services, or the support of our confidence, or the satisfaction of our hopes, such as are ; Jesus Christ the Son of the living God ; the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus ; forgiveness of sins by his blood ; resurrection of the dead ; and life eternal ; because these propositions qualify Christ for our Saviour and our Lawgiver, the one to engage our services, the other to endear them ; for so much is necessary as will make us to be his servants, and his disciples ; and what can be required more ? This only. Salvation is promised to the explicit belief of those Articles, and therefore those only are necessary, and those are sufficient ; but thus, to us in the formality of Christians, which is a formality superadded to a former capacity,

we, before we are Christians, are reasonable creatures, and capable of a blessed eternity, and there is a creed which is the Gentiles' creed, which is so supposed in the Christian creed, as it is supposed in a Christian to be a man, and that is, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

If any man will urge farther, that whatsoever is deducible from these Articles by necessary consequence, is necessary to be believed explicitly; I answer, it is true, if he sees the deduction and coherence of the parts; but it is not certain that every man shall be able to deduce whatsoever is either immediately, or certainly deducible from these premises; and then since salvation is promised to the explicit belief of these, I see not how any man can justify the making the way to heaven narrower than Jesus Christ hath made it, it being already so narrow, that there are few that find it.

In the pursuance of this great truth, the Apostles or the holy men, their contemporaries and disciples, composed a creed to be a rule of faith to all Christians, as appears in Irenæus, Tertullian,\* St Cyprian,† St Austin,‡ Ruffinus,§ and divers others;|| which creed, unless it

\* Apol. contr. Gent. c. 47. de veland. Virg. c. 1

† In Exposit. Symbol.

‡ Serm. 5. de Tempore, cap. 2.

§ In Symbol. apud Cyprian.

|| All the orthodox fathers maintain that the creed is of Apostolic origin. *Sext. Senensis, lib. 2. bibl. 5. vide Genebr l. 3. de Trin.*

had contained all the entire object of faith, and the foundation of religion, it cannot be imagined to what purpose it should serve ; and that it was so esteemed by the whole Church of God in all ages, appears in this, that since faith is a necessary predisposition to baptism in all persons capable of the use of reason, all Catechumens in the Latin Church coming to baptism, were interrogated concerning their faith, and gave satisfaction in the recitation of this creed. And in the East they professed exactly the same faith, something differing in words, but of the same matter, reason, design, and consequence ; and so they did at Jerusalem, so at Aquileia. This was that *correct and blameless faith, proclaimed by the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of God, apart from all novelty and innovation* ; ὄρθη και αμώμητος πίστις, ἥνπερ κηρύττει ἡ ἀγία τοῦ Θεοῦ καθολικὴ και ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία κατ' οὐδένα τρόπον καινισμόν δεξαμένη. These articles were *the instructions left by the holy Apostles and their fellow labourers to the holy Churches of God* ; τὰ τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων και του μετ' ἐκείνων διατριψάντων, ἐν ταῖς ἀγίαις Θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαις διδάγματα.\* Now since the Apostles and apostolical men and Churches, in these their symbols, did recite particular Articles to a considerable number, and were so minute in their recitation, as to descend to circumstances, it is more than probable that they omitted nothing of necessity ; and that these Articles

\* L. 5. Cod. de S. Trinit. et. fid. Cath. cum. recta.



are not general principles, in the bosom of which many more Articles, equally necessary to be believed, explicitly and more particular are enfolded; but that it is as minute an explication of those fundamental principles I before reckoned, as is necessary to salvation.

And therefore Tertullian calls the creed, *the rule of faith, by whose guidance, whatever appears ambiguous or obscure in Scripture may be investigated and explained.* *Regulum fidei, quâ salvâ et formâ ejus manente in suo ordine, possit in Scriptura tractari et inquiri, si quid videtur vel ambiguitate pendere vel obscuritate obumbrari.* *The seal of the heart and the oath of our warfare.* *Cordis signaculum et nostræ militiæ Sacramentum;* St Ambrose calls it, (*lib. 3. de Velandis Virgin.*) *The comprehension and perfection of our faith.* *Comprehensio fidei nostræ atque perfectio;* by St Austin, (*Serm. 115.*) *The confession, declaration, and rule of faith.* *Confessio, expositio, regula fidei;* generally by the ancients. The profession of this creed was the exposition of that saying of St Peter, *συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς Θεόν,* *The answer of a good conscience towards God.* For of the recitation and profession of this creed in baptism, it is that Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Body,* says, *The soul is not consecrated by the water, but by the truth professed.* *Anima non lotionem, sed responsionem sancitur.* And of this was the prayer of Hillary, (*lib. 12. de Trinit.*) *Regard this expression of my conscience, that I may always continue in the professions I have*

*made by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the sign of my regeneration.* Conserva hanc conscientiae meae vocem, ut quod in regenerationis meae symbolo baptizatus in Patre, Filio, Spir. S. professus sum semper obtineam.—And according to the rule and reason of this discourse, (that it may appear that the creed hath in it all Articles *primo et per se*, primely and universally,) the creed is just such an explication of that faith, which the Apostles preached, viz. the creed which St Paul recites, as contains in it all those things which entitle Christ to us in the capacities of our Lawgiver and our Saviour, such as enable him to the great work of redemption, according to the predictions concerning him, and such as engage and encourage our services. For, taking out the Article of Christ's descent into Hell, (which was not in the old creed, as appears in some of the copies I before referred to, in Tertullian, Ruffinus and Irenæus; and indeed was omitted in all the confessions of the Eastern Churches, in the Church of Rome, and in the Nicene creed, which by adoption came to be the creed of the Catholic Church,) all other Articles are such, as directly constitute the parts and work of our redemption, such as clearly derive the honour to Christ, and enable him with the capacities of our Saviour and Lord. The rest engage our services by proposition of such Articles, which are rather promises than propositions; and the whole creed, take it in any of the old forms, is but an analysis of that

which St Paul calls the word of salvation, whereby we shall be saved, viz. “that we confess Jesus to be Lord, and that God raised him from the dead;” by the first whereof he became our Lawgiver and our guardian, by the second he was our Saviour. The other things are but parts and main actions of those two. Now what reason there is in the world, that can enwrap anything else within the foundation, that is, in the whole body of Articles simply and inseparably necessary, or in the prime original necessity of faith, I cannot possibly imagine. These do the work, and therefore nothing can, upon the true grounds of reason, enlarge the necessity to the enclosure of other Articles.

Now if more were necessary than the Articles of the creed, I demand why was it made the characteristic\* note of a Christian from a Heretic, or a Jew, or an Infidel? Or to what purpose was it composed? Or if this was intended as sufficient, did the Apostles or those Churches, which they founded, know anything else to be necessary? If they did not, then either nothing more is necessary, (I speak of matters of mere belief,) or they did not know all the will of the Lord, and so were unfit dispensers of the mysteries of the kingdom; or if they did know more was necessary, and yet would not insert it, they did an act of public notice, and consigned it to all ages of the Church to no purpose, unless

\* Vide Isidor. de Eccles. offic. lib. 1. cap. 20. Suidan. Turnebum, lib. 2. c. 30. advers. Venant. For. in Exeg. Symb. Feuarent. in Iren. lib. 1. c. 2.

to beguile credulous people, by making them believe their faith was sufficient, having tried it by that touchstone apostolical, when there was no such matter.

But if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the Apostles admitted all to their communion, that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire? Why is not our faith of these Articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven, as it was in the Churches apostolical, who had guides more infallible that might without error have taught them superstructures enough, if they had been necessary? And so they did. But that they did not insert them into the creed, when they might have done it with as much certainty as these Articles, makes it clear to my understanding, that other things were not necessary, but these were; that whatever profit and advantages might come from other Articles, yet these were sufficient, and however certain persons might accidentally be obliged to believe much more, yet this was the one and only foundation of faith, upon which all persons were to build their hopes of heaven. This was therefore necessary to be taught to all, because of necessity to be believed by all; so that although other persons might commit a delinquency *in point of order*, if they did not know, or did not believe much more, because they were obliged to further disquisitions in order to other ends, yet none of these, who held the creed entire, could perish for want of necessary faith, though possibly he might for supine negli-

gence, or affected ignorance, or some other fault, which had influence upon his opinions and his understanding, he having a new supervening obligation from accidental circumstances to know and believe more.

Neither are we obliged to make these Articles more particular and minute than the creed. For since the Apostles, and indeed our blessed Lord himself promised heaven to them, who *believed him to be the Christ, that was to come into the world*, and that he who believes in him, should be partaker of the resurrection and life eternal, he will be as good as his word. Yet because this Article was very general, and a complexion rather than a single proposition; the Apostles and others, our Fathers in Christ, did make it more explicit, and though they have said no more than what lay entire and ready formed in the bosom of the great Article, yet they made their extracts to great purpose and absolute sufficiency, and therefore there needs no more deductions or remoter consequences from the first great Article, than the *Creed of the Apostles*. For although whatsoever is certainly deduced from any of these Articles, made already so explicit, is as certainly true, and as much to be believed as the Article itself, because nothing but what is true can flow from truth, *ex veris possunt nil nisi vera sequi*, yet because it is not certain that our deductions from them are certain, and what one calls evident, is so obscure to another, that he believes it false; it is the best and only safe course to rest in that explication the Apostles have

made, because if any of these apostolical deductions were not demonstrable evidently to follow from that great Article, to which salvation is promised, yet the authority of them, who compiled the symbol, the plain description of the Articles from the words of Scriptures, the evidence of reason demonstrating these to be the whole foundation, are sufficient upon great grounds of reason to ascertain us; but if we go farther, besides the easiness of being deceived, we, relying upon our own discourses, (which though they may be true and then bind us to follow them, but yet no more than when they only seem truest,) yet they cannot make the thing certain to another, much less necessary in itself. And since God would not bind us, upon pain of sin and punishment, to make deductions ourselves, much less would he bind us to follow another man's logic as an Article of our faith; I say much less another man's; for our own integrity, (for we will certainly be true to ourselves, and do our own business heartily,) is as fit and proper to be employed as another man's ability. He cannot secure me that his ability is absolute and the greatest, but I can be more certain that my own purposes and fidelity to myself are such. And since it is necessary to rest somewhere, lest we should run to an infinity, it is best to rest there where the Apostles and the Churches apostolical rested; when not only they who are able to judge, but others who are not, are equally ascertained of the certainty and of the sufficiency of that explication.

This I say, not that I believe it unlawful or unsafe for the Church, or any of the ecclesiastical rulers, or any wise man to extend his own creed to anything, which may certainly follow from any one of the Articles; but I say, that no such deduction is fit to be pressed on others as an article of faith; and that every deduction which is so made, unless it be such a thing as is at first evident to all, is but sufficient to make a human faith, nor can it amount to a divine, much less can be obligatory to bind a person of a differing persuasion, to subscribe under pain of losing his faith, or being a heretic. For it is a demonstration, that nothing can be necessary to be believed under pain of damnation, but such propositions of which it is certain that God hath spoken, and taught them to us, and of which it is certain that this is their sense and purpose. For if the sense be uncertain, we can no more be obliged to believe it in a certain sense, than we are to believe it at all, if it were not certain that God delivered it. But if it be only certain, that God spake it, and not certain to what sense, our faith of it is to be as indeterminate as its sense, and it can be no other in the nature of the thing, nor is it consonant to God's justice to believe of him, that he can or will require more. And this is of the nature of those propositions, which Aristotle calls *βασεως*, to which without any further probation, all wise men will give assent at its first publication. And therefore deductions inevident, from the evident and plain letter of faith, are as great recessions from the obligation, as

they are from the simplicity, and certainty of the article. And this I also affirm, although the church of any one denomination, or represented in a council, shall make the deduction or declaration. For unless Christ had promised his Spirit, to protect every particular church from all errors less material, unless he had promised an absolute universal infallibility *even in the most trifling matters*, unless superstructures be of the same necessity with the foundation, and that God's Spirit doth not only preserve his church in the being of a church, but in a certainty of not saying anything that is less certain; and that whether they will or no too; we may be bound to peace and obedience, to silence, and to charity, but have not a new article of faith made; and a new proposition thought consequent, as it is said, from an article of faith, becomes not therefore a part of the faith, nor of absolute necessity. "What did the Church ever aim to do by the decrees of her councils, but to make what was believed before, believed more firmly?" *Quid unquam aliud ecclesia conciliorum decretis enisa est, nisi ut quod antea simpliciter credebatur, hoc idem postea diligentius crederetur*, said Vincentius Lirinensis. Whatsoever was of necessary belief before, is so still, and hath a new degree added by reason of a new light or a clear explication; but no positions can be adopted into the foundation. The Church hath power to intend our faith, but not to extend it; to make our belief more evident, but not more large and comprehensive. For



Christ and his Apostles concealed nothing, that was necessary to the integrity of Christian faith, or salvation of our souls; Christ declared all the will of his Father, and the Apostles were stewards and dispensers of the same mysteries, and were faithful in all the house, and therefore concealed nothing, but taught the whole doctrine of Christ; so they said themselves. And, indeed, if they did not teach all the doctrine of faith, an angel or a man might have taught us other things than what they taught, without deserving an anathema, but not without deserving a blessing for making up that faith entire, which the Apostles left imperfect.

Now if they taught all the whole body of faith, either the Church in the following ages lost part of the faith, (and then where was their infallibility, and the effect of those glorious promises to which she pretends and hath certain title; for she may as well introduce a falsehood as lose a truth, it being as much promised to her that the Holy Ghost shall lead her into all truth, as that she shall be preserved from all errors, as appears, John xvi, 13,)—or if she retained all the faith, which Christ and his Apostles consigned and taught, then no age can, by declaring any point, make that be an article of faith, which was not so in all ages of Christianity before such declaration. And, indeed, if the church,\* by declaring an article, can make that to be

\* Vide Jacob Almain. in 3 Sent. d. 25. Q. Vnic. Dub. 3. Patet ergo, quod nulla veritas est Catholicæ ex approbatione, Ecclesiæ

necessary, which before was not necessary, I do not see how it can stand with the charity of the church so to do, (especially after so long experience she hath had that all men will not believe every such decision or explication,) for by so doing she makes the narrow way to heaven narrower, and chalks out one path more to the devil than he had before, and yet the way was broad enough when it was at the narrowest. For before, differing persons might be saved in diversity of persuasions, and now after this declaration, if they cannot, there is no other alteration made, but that some shall be damned, who before even in the same dispositions and belief should have been beatified persons. For therefore, it is well for the fathers of the primitive church, that their errors were not discovered, for if they had been contested, (for that would have been called discovery enough,) "either they must have relinquished their errors, or been expelled from the church," *vel errores amendassent, vel ab ecclesia ejecti fuissent.*\* But it is better as it was, they went to heaven by that good fortune, whereas, otherwise they might have gone to the devil.

And yet there were some errors, particularly that of St Cyprian that was discovered, and he went to heaven, it is thought; possibly they might so too for all

vel Papæ, *Gabr. Biel. in 3. Sent. Dist. 25. Q. Unic. Art. 3. Dub. 3 ad finem.*

\* Bellar. de Laicis, l. 3. c. 20. Sect. ad Primam Confirmationem.

this pretence. But suppose it true, yet whether that declaration of an article, of which with safety we either might have doubted or been ignorant, does more good than the damning of those many souls occasionally, but yet certainly and foreknowingly does hurt, I leave it to all wise and good men to determine. And yet besides this, it cannot enter into my thoughts, that it can possibly consist with God's goodness to put it into the power of man, so palpably and openly to alter the paths and inlets to heaven, and to straiten his mercies, unless he had furnished these men with an infallible judgment, and an infallible prudence, and a never failing charity; that they should never do it but with great necessity, and with great truth, and without ends and human designs, of which I think no arguments can make us certain what the Primitive Church hath done in this case. I shall afterwards consider and give an account of it, but for the present there is no insecurity in ending there where the Apostles ended, in building where they built, in resting where they left us, unless the same infallibility, which they had, had still continued, which I think I shall hereafter make evident it did not. And therefore those extensions of creed, which were made in the first ages of the church, although for the matter they were most true, yet because it was not certain that they should be so, and that they might have been otherwise, therefore they could not be in the same order of faith, nor in the same degrees of necessity to be believed, with the articles

apostolical ; and therefore, whether they did well or no in laying the same weight upon them, or whether they did lay the same weight or no, we will afterwards consider.

But to return. I consider that a foundation of faith cannot alter ; unless a new building be to be made, the foundation is the same still ; and this foundation is no other, but that which Christ and his Apostles laid, which doctrine is like himself, yesterday and to day, and the same forever ; so that the articles of necessary belief to all, which are the only foundation, they cannot be several in several ages, and to several persons. Nay, the sentence and declaration of the church cannot lay this foundation, or make anything of the foundation, because the church cannot lay her foundation ; we must suppose her to be a building, and that she relies upon the foundation, which is therefore supposed to be laid before, because she is built upon it, or, to make it more explicate, because a cloud may arise from the allegory of building and foundation, it is plainly thus ; the church being a company of men obliged to the duties of faith and obedience, the duty and obligation being of the faculties of will and understanding to adhere to such an object, must presuppose the object made ready for them ; for as the object is before the act in order of nature, and therefore not to be produced or increased by the faculty, which is receptive, and cannot be active upon its proper object ; so the object of the church's faith is in order of nature before the church, or before

the act and habit of faith, and therefore cannot be enlarged by the church, any more than the act of the visive faculty can add visibility to the object. So that if we have found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay, that is, what body and system of articles simply necessary they taught and required of us to believe, we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, we cannot enlarge that system or collection.

Now then, although all that they said is true, and nothing of it to be doubted or disbelieved, yet as all that they said is neither written nor delivered, because all was not necessary, so we know that of those things which are written, some things are as far off from the foundation, as those things which were omitted, and therefore although now accidentally, they must be believed by all that know them, yet it is not necessary all should know them; and that all should know them in the same sense and interpretation, is neither probable nor obligatory; but therefore since these things are to be distinguished by some differences of necessary and not necessary, whether or no is not the declaration of Christ and his Apostles affixing salvation to the belief of some great comprehensive articles, and the act of the Apostles rendering them as explicit as they thought convenient, and consigning that creed made so explicit, as a tessera of a Christian, as a comprehension of the articles of his belief, as a sufficient disposition and an expression of the faith of a *Catechumen* in order to baptism; whether or no I say, all this be not sufficient

probation, that these only are of absolute necessity, that this is sufficient for mere belief in order to heaven, and that therefore whosoever believes these Articles heartily and explicitly, Θεὸς μένει ἐν αὐτῷ, as St John's expression is, "God dwelleth in him," I leave it to be considered and judged of from the premises. Only this, if the old doctors had been made judges in these questions, they would have passed their affirmative; for to instance in one for all, of this it was said by Tertulian, "This symbol is the one sufficient immoveable, unalterable and unchangeable rule of faith, that admits no increment or decrement; but if the integrity and unity of this be preserved, in all other things men may take a liberty of enlarging their knowledges and Prophecys, according as they are assisted by the grace of God."

ON THE  
AUTHORITY OF REASON

IN  
SUBJECTS OF RELIGION.

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FROM THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING.

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HERE then I consider, that although no man may be trusted to judge for all others, unless this person were infallible and authorized so to do, which no man nor no company of men is, yet every man may be trusted to judge for himself; I say every man that can judge at all, (as for others, they are to be saved as it pleaseth God,) but others that can judge at all must either choose their guides, who shall judge for them, (and then they oftentimes do the wisest, and always save themselves a labour, but then they choose too,) or if they be persons of greater understanding, then they are to choose for themselves in particular, what the others do in general, and by choosing their guide, and for this, any man may be better trusted for himself, than any man can be for another; for in this case his own interest is most concerned; and ability is not so

necessary as honesty, which certainly every man will best preserve in his own case, and to himself, (and if he does not, it is he that must smart for it,) and it is not required of us not to be in error, but that we endeavour to avoid it.

He that follows his guide so far as his reason goes along with him, or which is all one, he that follows his own reason, not guided only by natural arguments, but by divine revelation, and all other good means, hath great advantages over him that gives himself wholly to follow any human guide whatsoever, because he follows all their reasons and his own too; he follows them till reason leaves them, or till it seems so to him, which is all one to his particular, for by the confession of all sides, an erroneous conscience binds him, when a right guide does not bind him. But he that gives himself up wholly to a guide is oftentimes, I mean if he be a discerning person, forced to do violence to his own understanding, and to lose all the benefit of his own discretion, that he may reconcile his reason to his guide. And of this we see infinite inconveniences in the church of Rome; for we find persons of great understanding, oftentimes so amused with the authority of their church, that it is pity to see them sweat in answering some objections, which they know not how to do, but yet believe they must, because the church hath said it. So that if they read, study, pray, search records, and use all the means of art and industry in the pursuit of truth, it is not with a resolution to follow that



which shall seem truth to them, but to confirm what before they did believe; and if any argument shall seem unanswerable against any article of their church, they are to take it for a temptation, not for an illumination, and they are to use it accordingly; which makes them make the devil to be the author of that, which God's Spirit hath assisted them to find in the use of lawful means and the search of truth. And when the devil of falsehood is like to be cast out by God's Spirit, they say that it is through Beelzebub; which was one of the worst things that ever the Pharisees said or did. And was it not a plain stifling of the just and reasonable demands made by the emperor, the kings of France and Spain, and by the ablest divines among them, which was used in the council of Trent, when they demanded the restitution of priests to their liberty of marriage, the use of the chalice, the service in the vulgar tongue, and these things not only in pursuance of truth, but for other great and good ends, even to take away an infinite scandal and a great schism? And yet when they themselves did profess it, and all the world knew these reasonable demands were denied merely upon a politic consideration, yet that these things should be framed into articles, and decrees of faith, and they forever after bound not only to desire the same things, but to think the contrary to be divine truths; never was reason made more a slave or more useless. Must not all the world say, either they must be great hypocrites, or do great violence to their understanding, when they not

only cease from their claim, but must also believe it to be unjust? If the use of their reason had not been restrained by the tyranny and imperiousness of their guide, what the emperor, and the kings, and their theologians would have done, they can best judge, who consider the reasonableness of the demand, and the unreasonableness of the denial. But we see many wise men who with their *optandum esset ut ecclesia licentiam daret, &c.* proclaim to all the world, that in some things they consent and do not consent, and do not heartily believe, what they are bound publicly to profess; and they themselves would clearly see a difference, if a contrary decree should be framed by the church; they would with an infinite greater confidence rest themselves in other propositions, than what they must believe as the case now stands, and they would find that the authority of a church is a prejudice, as often as a free and modest use of reason is a temptation.

God will have no man pressed with another's inconveniences in matters spiritual and intellectual, no man's salvation to depend upon another, and every tooth that eats sour grapes shall be set on edge for itself, and for none else; and this is remarkable in that saying of God by the Prophet, "If the Prophet ceases to tell my people of their sins, and leads them into error, the people shall die in their sins, and the blood of them I will require at the hands of that Prophet;" Ezek. xxxiii; meaning, that God hath so set the prophets to guide us, that we also are to follow them by a voluntary

assent by an act of choice and election. For although accidentally and occasionally the sheep may perish by the shepherd's fault, yet that which hath the chiefest influence upon their final condition, is their own act and election; and therefore, God hath so appointed guides to us, that if we perish, it may be accounted upon both our scores, upon our own, and the guides' too; which says plainly, that although we are intrusted to our guides, we are intrusted to ourselves too. Our guides must direct us, and yet if they fail, God hath not so left us to them, but he hath given us enough to ourselves, to discover their failings, and our own duties in all things necessary. And for other things we must do as well as we can.

It is best to follow our guides, if we know nothing better; but if we do, it is better to follow the pillar of fire, than a pillar of cloud, though both possibly may lead to Canaan; but then also it is possible that it may be otherwise. But I am sure, if I do my own best; then if it be best to follow a guide, and if it be also necessary, I shall be sure by God's grace and my own endeavour, to get to it; but if I, without the particular engagement of my own understanding, follow a guide, possibly I may be guilty of extreme negligence, or I may extinguish God's Spirit, or do violence to my own reason. And whether intrusting myself wholly with another, be not a laying up my talent in a napkin, I am not so well assured. I am certain the other is not. And since another man's answering for me will not

hinder, but that I also shall answer for myself; as it concerns him to see he does not wilfully misguide me, so it concerns me to see that he shall not if I can help it; if I cannot, it will not be required at my hands; whether it be his fault, or his invincible error, I shall be charged with neither.

This is no other than what is enjoined as a duty. For since God will be justified with a free obedience, and there is an obedience of understanding as well as of will and affection, it is of great concernment, as to be willing to believe whatever God says, so also to inquire diligently whether the will of God be so as is pretended.\* Even our acts of understanding are acts of choice; and therefore it is commanded as a duty, to “Search the Scriptures, to try the spirits, whether they be of God or no, of ourselves, to be able to judge what is right, to try all things, and to retain that which is best.” For he that resolves not to consider, resolves not to be careful whether he have truth or no, and therefore hath an affection indifferent to truth or falsehood, which is all one as if he did choose amiss; and since, when things are truly propounded and made reasonable and intelligible, we cannot but assent, and then it is no thanks to us; we have no way to give our wills to God in matters of belief, but by our industry in searching it, and examining the grounds upon which the propounders build their dictates. And the not doing it is

\* Mat xv, 10. John v, 40. 1 John iv, 1. Ephes. v, 17. Luke xxiv, 25. Rom. iii, 11, and i, 28. Apoc. ii, 2. Acts, xvii 11.

oftentimes a cause, that God gives a man over *εἰς τοῦν ἀδόκιμον*, into a reprobate and undiscerning mind and understanding.

And this very thing, though men will not understand it, is the perpetual practice of all men in the world, that can give a reasonable account of their faith. The very Catholic Church itself is *rationabilis et ubique diffusa*,\* saith Optatus, “reasonable, as well as diffused everywhere.” For take the proselytes of the Church of Rome, even in their greatest submission of understanding, they seem to themselves to follow their reason most of all. For if you tell them, Scripture and tradition are their rules to follow, they will believe you, when they have a reason for it, and if they take you upon your word, they have a reason for that too, either they believe you a learned man, or a good man, or that you can have no ends upon them, or something that is of an equal height to fit their understandings. If you tell them they must believe the Church, you must tell them why they are bound to it, and if you quote Scripture to prove it, you must give them leave to judge, whether the words alleged, speak your sense or no; and therefore, to dissent, if they say no such thing. And although all men are not wise, and proceed discreetly, yet all make their choice some way or other. He that chooses to please his fancy, takes his choice as much, as he that chooses prudently. And no man speaks more unreasonably, than he that denies to men

\* Lib. 3.

the use of their reason, in the choice of their religion. For that I may by the way remove the common prejudice, reason and authority are not things incompetent or repugnant, especially when the authority is infallible and supreme; for there is no greater reason in the world, than to believe such an authority.

But then we must consider, whether every authority that pretends to be such is so indeed. And therefore, *Deus dixit, ergo hoc verum est*, "God hath said it, therefore it is true," is the greatest demonstration in the world for things of this nature. But it is not so in human dictates, and yet reason and human authority are not enemies. For it is a good argument for us to follow such an opinion, because it is made sacred by the authority of councils and ecclesiastical tradition, and sometimes it is the best reason we have in a question, and then it is to be strictly followed; but there may also be at other times a reason greater than it that speaks against it, and then the authority must not carry it. But then the difference is not between reason and authority, but between this reason and that, which is greater; for authority is a very good reason, and is to prevail, unless a stronger comes and disarms it, but then it must give place. So that in this question, by reason I do not mean a distinct topic, but a transcendent that runs through all topics; for reason, like logic, is the instrument of all things else, and when revelation, and philosophy, and public experience, and all other grounds of probability or demonstra-

tion have supplied us with matter, then reason does but make use of them ; that is, in plain terms, there being so many ways of arguing, so many sects, such differing interests, such variety of authority, so many pretences, and so many false beliefs, it concerns every wise man to consider which is the best argument, which proposition relies upon the truest grounds ; and if this were not his only way, why do men dispute and urge arguments, why do they cite councils and fathers, why do they allege Scripture and tradition, and all this on all sides, and to contrary purposes ? If we must judge, then we must use our reason ; if we must not judge, why do they produce evidence ? Let them leave disputing, and decree propositions magisterially, but then we may choose whether we will believe them or no ; or if they say we must believe them, they must prove, it and tell us why. And all these disputes concerning tradition, councils, and fathers, are not arguments against, or besides reason ; but contestations and pretences to the best arguments, and the most certain satisfaction of our reason.

But then all these coming into question submit themselves to reason, that is, to be judged by human understanding, upon the best grounds and information it can receive. So that Scripture, tradition, councils, and fathers, are the evidence in a question, but reason is the judge ; that is, we being the persons that are to be persuaded, we must see that we be persuaded reasonably, and it is unreasonable to assent to a lesser

evidence, when a greater and clearer is propounded, but of that every man for himself is to take cognizance if he be able to judge, if he be not, he is not bound under the tie of necessity to know anything of it ; that that is necessary shall be certainly conveyed to him ; God, that best can, will certainly take care for that ; for if he does not, it becomes to be not necessary ; or if it should still remain necessary, and he be damned for not knowing it, and yet to know it be not in his power, then who can help it ? There can be no further care in this business. In other things, there being no absolute and prime necessity, we are left to our liberty, to judge that way that makes best demonstration of our piety, and of our love to God and truth, not that way that is always the best argument of an excellent understanding, for this may be a blessing, but the other only is a duty.

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ON THE

CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE

OF

ORIGINAL SIN.

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FROM A TREATISE ENTITLED, "DEUS JUSTIFICATUS," BEING A  
LETTER TO A LADY.

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FIRST, Madam, be pleased to remember, that the question is not whether there be any such thing as *Original Sin*; for it is certain, and confessed on all hands almost. For my part, I cannot but confess that to be which I feel, and groan under, and by which all the world is miserable.

Adam turned his back upon the Sun, and dwelt in the dark and the shadow; he sinned, and fell into God's displeasure, and was made naked of all his supernatural endowments, and was ashamed and sentenced to death, and deprived of the means of long life, and of the sacrament and instrument of immortality, I mean the Tree of Life, he then fell under the evils of a sickly body, and a passionate, ignorant, uninstructed

soul; his sin made him sickly, his sickness made him peevish; his sin left him ignorant, his ignorance made him foolish and unreasonable. His sin left him to his nature, and by his nature, whoever was to be born at all, was to be born a child, and to do before he could understand, and be bred under laws, to which he was always bound, but which could not always be exacted. And he was to choose, when he could not reason, and had passions most strong, when he had his understanding most weak, and was to ride a wild horse without a bridle, and the more need he had of a curb, the less strength he had to use it, and this being the case of all the world, what was every man's evil became all men's greater evil; and though alone it was very bad, yet when they came together it was made much worse; like ships in a storm, every one alone hath enough to do to outride it; but when they meet, besides the evils of the storm, they find the intolerable calamity of their mutual concussion, and every ship, that is ready to be oppressed with the tempest, is a worse tempest to every vessel, against which it is violently dashed. So it is in mankind, every man hath evil enough of his own; and it is hard for a man to live soberly, temperately, and religiously; but when he hath parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies, buyers and sellers, lawyers and physicians, a family and a neighbourhood, a king over him, or tenants under him, a bishop to rule in matters of government spiritual, and a people to be ruled by him in the affairs of their souls;

then it is that every man dashes against another, and one relation requires what another denies ; and when one speaks, another will contradict him ; and that which is well spoken, is sometimes innocently mistaken, and that upon a good cause produces an evil effect, and by these, and ten thousand other concurrent causes, man is made more than most miserable.

But the main thing is this ; when God was angry with Adam, the man fell from the state of grace ; for God withdrew his grace, and we returned to the state of mere nature, of our prime creation.

This was the great effect of Adam's sin, which became therefore to us a punishment, because of the appendant infirmity that went along with it ; for Adam being spoiled of all the rectitudes and supernatural heights of grace, and thrust back to the form of nature, and left to derive grace to himself by a new economy, or to be without it ; and his posterity left just so as he was left himself ; he was permitted to the power of his enemy that betrayed him, and put under the power of his body, whose appetites would govern him ; and when they would grow irregular, could not be mastered by anything that was about him, or born with him, so that his case was miserable and naked, and his state of things was imperfect and would be disordered.

But now, Madam, things being thus bad, are made worse by the superinduced doctrines of men, which when I have represented to your ladyship, and told

upon what accounts I have reprov'd them, you will find that I have reason.

There are one sort of Calvin's scholars, whom we for distinction's sake call *Supralapsarians*, who are so fierce in their sentences of predestination and reprobation, that they say God looked upon mankind, only as his creation, and his slaves, over whom he having absolute power was very gracious, that he was pleased to take some few, and save them absolutely; and to the other greater part he did no wrong, though he was pleased to damn them eternally, only because he pleased; for they were his own; and *qui jure suo utitur nemini facit injuriam*, says the law of reason, every one may do what he please with his own. But this bloody and horrible opinion is held but by a few; as tending directly to the dishonour of God, charging on him alone, that he is the cause of men's sins on earth, and of men's eternal torments in hell; it makes God to be powerful, but his power not to be good; it makes him more cruel to men, than good men can be to dogs and sheep; it makes him give the final sentence of hell, without any pretence or colour of justice; it represents him to be that which all the world must naturally fear, and naturally hate, as being a God delighting in the death of innocents; for so they are when he resolves to damn them; and then most tyrannically cruel, and unreasonable; for it says, that to make a postnate pretence of justice, it decrees that men inevitably shall sin, that they may inevitably, but justly be

damm'd ; it makes God to be all that, for which any other thing or person is or can be hated ; for it makes him neither to be good, nor just, nor reasonable, but a mighty enemy to the biggest part of mankind ; it makes him to hate what himself hath made, and to punish that in another, which in himself he decreed should not be avoided ; it charges the wisdom of God with folly, as having no means to glorify his justice, but by doing unjustly, by bringing in that which himself hates, that he might do what himself loves ; doing as Tiberius did to Brutus and Néro, the sons of Germanicus ; *variâ fraude induxit ut concitarentur ad convitia, et concitati perderentur* ; provoking them to rail, that he might punish their reproachings.

This opinion reproaches the words of the spirit of Scripture, it charges God with hypocrisy and want of mercy, making him a father of cruelties, not of mercy, and is a perfect overthrow of all religion, and all laws, and all government ; it destroys the very being, and nature of all election, thrusting a man down to the lowest form of beasts and birds, to whom a spontaneity of doing certain actions is given by God, but it is in them so natural, that it is unavoidable. Now concerning this horrid opinion, I for my part shall say nothing but this ; that he, that says there was no such man as Alexander, would tell a horrible lie, and be injurious to all story, and to the memory and fame of that great prince ; but he that should say, it is true there was such a man as Alexander, but he was a tyrant, and a

bloodsucker, cruel and injurious, false and dissembling, an enemy of mankind, and for all the reasons of the world to be hated and reproached, would certainly dishonour Alexander more, and be his greatest enemy. So I think in this, that the Atheists, who deny there is a God, do not so impiously against God, as they that charge him with foul appellatives, or maintain such sentences, which if they were true, God could not be true. But these men, Madam, have nothing to do in the question of Original Sin, save only, that they say that God did decree that Adam should fall, and all the sins that he sinned, and all the world after him, are no effects of choice, but of predestination, that is, they were the actions of God, rather than man.

But because these men, even to their brethren, seem to speak evil things of God, therefore the more wary and temperate of the Calvinists bring down the order of reprobation lower ; affirming that God looked upon all mankind in Adam as fallen into his displeasure, hated by God, truly guilty of his sin, liable to eternal damnation, and they being all equally condemned, he was pleased to separate some, the smaller number far, and irresistibly bring them to heaven ; but the far greater number he passed over, leaving them to be damned for the sin of Adam, and so they think they save God's justice ; and this was the design and device of the synod of Dort.

Now to bring this to pass, they teach concerning Original Sin ;

1. That by this sin our first parents fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties, and parts of soul and body.

2. That whatsoever death was due to our first parents for this sin, they being the root of all mankind, and the guilt of this sin being imputed, the same is conveyed to all their posterity by ordinary generation.

3. That by this original corruption we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil; and that from hence proceed all actual transgressions.

4. This corruption of nature remains in the regenerate, although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin.

5. Original sin being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God and curse of the law, and so made subject to death with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. These are the sayings of the late assembly at Westminster.

Against this heap of errors and dangerous propositions, I have made my former discoursings and statings of the question of Original Sin. These are the doctrines of the Presbyterian, whose face is towards us, but it is over against us in this and many other questions of great concernment. *Nemo tam propè procul-*

*que nobis.* He is nearest to us and furthest from us ; but because I have as great a love to their persons, as I have a dislike to some of their doctrines, I shall endeavour to serve truth and them, by reprovng those propositions, which make truth and them to stand at distance.

Now I shall first speak to the thing in general and its designs, then I shall make some observations upon the particulars.

This device of our Presbyterians, and of the synod of Dort, is but an artifice to save their proposition harmless, and to stop the outcries of Scripture and reason, and of all the world against them. But this way of stating the article of reprobation is as horrid in the effect, as the other. For,

Is it by a natural consequent that we are guilty of Adam's sin, or is it by the decree of God? Naturally it cannot be ; for then the sins of all our forefathers, who are to their posterity the same that Adam was to his, must be ours ; and not only Adam's first sin, but his others are ours upon the same account. But if it be by the decree of God, by his choice and constitution, that it should be so, as Mr Calvin and Dr Twisse,\* that I may name no more for that side, do expressly teach, it follows, that God is the author of our sin. So that I may use Mr Calvin's words ; " how is it that so many nations, with their children, should be involved

\* Instit. l. 3, c. 23. Sect. 7.—Vind. Grat. l. 1, p. Digress. 4, c. 3.



in the fall without remedy, but because God would have it so?" And if that be the matter, then to God, as to the cause, must that sin, and that damnation be accounted.

And let it then be considered, whether this be not as bad as the worst; for the *Supralapsarians* say, God did decree that the greatest part of mankind should perish, only because he would. The *Sublapsarians* say, that God made it by his decree necessary, that all we, who were born of Adam, should be born guilty of Original Sin, and he it was, who decreed to damn whom he pleased for that sin, in which he decreed they should be born; and both these he did for no other consideration, but because he would. Is it not therefore evident, that he absolutely decreed damnation to these persons? For he that decrees the end, and he that decrees the only necessary and effective means to the end, and decrees that it shall be the end of that means, does decree absolutely alike; though by several dispensations. And then all the evil consequence, which I reckoned before, to be the monstrous productions of the first way, are all daughters of the other; and if Solomon were here, he could not tell which were the truer mother.

Now that the case is equal between them, some of their own chiefest do confess; so Dr Twisse. If God may ordain men to hell for Adam's sin, which is derived unto them by God's only constitution, he may as well do it absolutely without any such constitution. The

same also is affirmed by Maccovius, and by Mr Calvin.\* And the reason is plain ; for he that does a thing for a reason, which himself makes, may as well do it without a reason, or he may make his own will to be the reason, because the thing, and the motive of the thing, come in both cases equally from the same principle, and from that alone.

Now, Madam, be pleased to say, whether I had not reason and necessity for what I have taught. You are a happy mother of a fair and hopeful posterity, your children and nephews are dear to you as your right eye, and yet you cannot love them so well as God loves them, and it is possible that a mother should forget her children, yet God even then will not, cannot ; but if our father and mother forsake us, God taketh us up. Now, Madam, consider, could you have found in your heart, when the nurses and midwives had bound up the heads of any of your children, when you had borne them with pain and joy upon your knees, could you have been tempted to give command, that murderers should be brought to slay them alive, to put them to exquisite tortures, and then in the midst of their saddest groans, throw any one of them into the flames of a fierce fire, for no other reason, but because he was born at London, or upon a Friday, when the moon was in her prime, or for what other reason you had made, and they could never avoid ? Could you have

\* Disp. 18, Inst. lib. 3, cap. 23, sect. 23.

been delighted in their horrid shrieks and outcries, or have taken pleasure in their unavoidable, and their intolerable calamity? Could you have smiled, if the hangman had snatched your eldest son from his nurse's breasts, and dashed his brains out against the pavement; and would you not have wondered, that any father or mother could espy the innocence and pretty smiles of your sweet babes, and yet tear their limbs in pieces, or devise devilish artifices to make them roar with intolerable convulsions? Could you desire to be thought good, and yet have delighted in such cruelty? I know I may answer for you; you would first have died yourself. And yet I say again, God loves mankind better than we can love one another, and he is essentially just, and he is infinitely merciful, and he is all goodness, and, therefore, though we might possibly do evil things, yet he cannot; and yet this doctrine of the Presbyterian reprobation says he both can and does things, the very apprehension of which hath caused many in despair to drown or hang themselves.

Now if the doctrine of absolute reprobation be so horrid, so intolerable a proposition, so unjust and blasphemous to God, so injurious and cruel to men, and that there is no colour or pretence to justify it, but by pretending our guilt of Adam's sin, and damnation to be the punishment; then because from truth nothing but truth can issue, that must needs be a lie, from which such horrid consequences do proceed. For the case in short is this; if it be just for God to damn any

one of Adam's posterity, for Adam's sin, then it is just in him to damn all; for all his children are equally guilty; and then if he spares any, it is mercy; and the rest who perish have no cause to complain. But if all these fearful consequences, which reason and religion so much abhor, do so certainly follow from such doctrines of reprobation, and these doctrines wholly rely upon this pretence, it follows, that the pretence is infinitely false and intolerable; and that, so far as we understand the rules and measures of justice, it cannot be just for God to damn us for being in a state of calamity, to which state we entered no way, but by his constitution and decree.

You see, Madam, I had reason to reprove that doctrine, which said, it was just in God to damn us for the sin of Adam.

Though this be the main error, yet there are some other collateral things, which I can by no means approve, such is that; *first*, That by the sin of Adam our parents became wholly defiled in all the faculties and powers of their souls and bodies; and *secondly*, That by this we also are disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil; and, *thirdly*, That from hence proceed all actual transgressions; and, *fourthly*, That our natural corruption in the regenerate still remains, though it be pardoned and mortified, and is still properly a sin.

Against this, I opposed these propositions; that the effect of Adam's sin was in himself bad enough; for it

divested him of that state of grace and favour where God placed him ; it threw him from paradise, and all the advantages of that place ; it left him in the state of nature ; but yet his nature was not spoiled by that sin ; he was not wholly inclined to all evil, neither was he disabled and made opposite to all good ; only his good was imperfect, it was natural and fell short of heaven ; for till his nature was invested with a new nature, he could go no further than the design of his first nature, that is, without Christ, without a spirit of Christ, he could never arrive at heaven, which is his supernatural condition. But *First*, There still remained in him a natural freedom of doing good or evil. *Secondly*, In every one that was born, there are great inclinations to some good. *Thirdly*, Where our nature was averse to good, it is not the direct *sin of nature*, but the imperfection of it, the reason of being, because God superinduced laws against our natural inclination, and yet there was in nature nothing sufficient to make us contradict our nature in obedience to God ; all that being to come from a supernatural and divine principle. These I shall prove together, for one depends upon another.

And first, that the liberty of will did not perish to mankind by the fall of Adam is so evident, that St Austin, who is an adversary in some parts of this question, but not yet, by way of question and confidence asks, *quis autem nostrum dicat, quod primi hominis peccato perierit liberum arbitrium de humano genere?*\* Which of

\* Lib. 1. ad Boniface c. 2.

us can say, that the liberty of our will did perish by the sin of the first man? And he adds a rare reason; for it is so certain, that it did not perish in a sinner, that this thing only is it by which they do sin, especially when they delight in their sin, and by the love of sin, that thing is pleasing to them which they list to do. And therefore, when we are charged with sin, it is worthy of inquiry, whence it is that we are sinners? Is it by the necessity of nature, or by the liberty of our will? If by nature and not choice, then it is good and not evil; for whatsoever is our nature, is of God's making, and consequently is good; but if we are sinners by choice and liberty of will, whence had we this liberty? If from Adam, then we have not lost it; but if we had it not from him, then from him we do not derive all our sin; for by this liberty alone we sin.

If it be replied, that we are free to sin, but not to good; it is such a foolery, and the cause of the mistake so evident, and so ignorant, that I wonder any man of learning, or common sense should own it. For if I be free to evil, then I can choose evil, or refuse it; if I can refuse it, then I can do good; for to refuse that evil is good, and it is in the commandment, *eschew evil*, but if I cannot choose or refuse it, how am I free to evil? For *voluntas* and *libertas*, *will* and *liberty* in philosophy are not the same. I may will it, when I cannot will the contrary; as the saints in heaven, and God himself wills good; they cannot will evil; because to do so is imperfection and contrary to felicity. But

here is no liberty, for liberty is with power to do, or not to do ; to do this or the contrary ; and if this liberty be not in us, we are not in the state of obedience, or of disobedience ; which is the state of all them who are alive, who are neither in hell nor heaven. For it is to many purposes useful, that we consider that in natural things to be determined shows a narrowness of being ; and therefore liberty of action is better, because it approaches nearer to infinity. But in moral things liberty is a direct imperfection, a state of weakness, and supposes weakness of reason and weakness of love ; the imperfection of the agent, or the unworthiness of the object. Liberty of will is like the motion of a magnetic needle toward the north, full of trepidation, till it be fixed where it would fain dwell forever. Either the object is but good in one regard, or we have but an uncertain apprehension, or but a beginning love to it, or it could never be that we could be free to choose, that is, to love it or not to love it. And, therefore, it is so far from being true, that by the fall of Adam we lost our liberty, that is more likely to be the consequence of it ; as being a state of imperfection, proper indeed to them who are to live under laws, and to such who are to work for a reward, and may fail of it ; but cannot go away till we either lose all hopes of good by descending into hell, or are past all fear or possibility of evil by going to heaven. But that this is our case, if I had no other argument in the world, and were never so prejudicate and obstinate a person,

I think I should be perfectly convinced by those words of St Paul, 1 Cor. vii, xxxvii. The Apostle speaks of a good act tending not only to the keeping of a precept, but to a counsel of perfection; and concerning that, he hath these words; “Nevertheless, he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart, that he will keep his virgin, doth well.” The words are plain, and need no explication. If this be not a plain liberty of choice, and a power of will, those words mean nothing, and we can never hope to understand one another’s meaning. But if sin be avoidable, then we have liberty of choice. If it be unavoidable, it is not imputable by the measures of laws and justice; what it is by empire and tyranny, let the adversaries inquire and prove. But since all theology, all schools of learning consent in this, that an invincible, or unavoidable, ignorance does wholly excuse from sin; why an invincible and an unavoidable necessity shall not also excuse, I confess I have not yet been taught.

But if by Adam’s sin we be so utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, wholly inclined to evil, and from hence come all actual sins, that is, that by Adam we are brought to that pass, that we cannot choose but sin; it is a strange severity, that this should descend upon persons otherwise most innocent, and that this which is the most grievous of all evils; for *prima et maxima peccantium pœna est peccasse*, said



Seneca, to be given over to sin, is the worst calamity, the most extreme anger, never inflicted directly at all for any sin, as I have elsewhere proved, and not indirectly, but upon the extremest anger; which cannot be supposed, unless God be more angry with us for being born men, than for choosing to be sinners.

The consequence of these arguments is this; that our faculties are not so wholly spoiled by Adam's fall, but that we can choose good or evil; that our nature is not wholly disabled and made opposite to all good; but to nature are left and given as much, as to the handmaid Agar; nature hath nothing to do with the inheritance, but she and her sons have gifts given them; and by nature we have laws of virtue, and inclinations to virtue; and naturally we love God, and worship him, and speak good things of him, and love our parents, and abstain from incestuous mixtures, and are pleased when we do well, and affrighted within when we sin in horrid instances against God. All this is in nature, and much good comes from nature, *Neque enim quasi lassa et effæta natura est, ut nihil jam laudabile pariat*; nature is not so old, so obsolete and dried a trunk, as to bring no good fruits upon its own stock. And the Frenchmen have a good proverb, *bonus sanguis non mentitur*, a good blood never lies; and some men are naturally chaste, and some are abstemious, and many are just and friendly, and noble and charitable; and therefore all actual sins do not proceed from this sin of Adam; for if the sin of Adam left us in liberty to sin, and that this liberty was before Adam's fall, then it is

not long of Adam's fall that we sin ; by his fall it should rather be, according to their principles, that we cannot choose but do this or that, and then it is no sin. But to say, that our actual sins should any more proceed from Adam's fall, than Adam's fall should proceed from itself, is not to be imagined ; for what made Adam sin when he fell ? If a fatal decree made him sin, then he was nothing to blame.

*Fati ista culpa est,  
Nemo fit fato nocens.*

No guilt upon mankind can lie  
For what's the fault of destiny.

And Adam might with just reason lay the blame from himself, and say as Agamemnon did in Homer,

————— ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἴτιος εἰμὶ  
' Ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ μοῖρα, καὶ ἡεροφοῖτις Ἑριννύς.

“ It was not I that sinned, but it was fate or a fury, it was God and not I,” it was not my act, but the effect of the divine decree, and then the same decree may make us sin, and not the sin of Adam be the cause of it. But if a liberty of will made Adam sin, then this liberty to sin being still left us, this liberty and not Adam's sin is the cause of all our actual.

Concerning the other clause in the Presbyterian article, that our natural corruption in the regenerate still remains, and *is still a sin, and properly a sin* ; I have, I confess, heartily opposed it, and shall besides my arguments, confute it with my blood, if God shall call me ;

for it is so great a reproach to the spirit and power of Christ, and to the effects of baptism, to Scripture, and to right reason, that all good people are bound in conscience to be zealous against it.

For when Christ came to reconcile us to his Father, he came to take away our sins, not only to pardon them, but to destroy them; and if the regenerate, in whom the spirit of Christ rules, and in whom all their habitual sins are dead, are still under the servitude, and in the stocks of Original Sin, then it follows, not only that our guilt of Adam's sin is greater than our own actual, the sin that we never consented to, is of a deeper grain than that which we have chosen and delighted in, and God was more angry with Cain, that he was born of Adam, than that he killed his brother; and Judas by descent from the first Adam contracted that sin, which he could never be quit of, but he might have been quit of his betraying the second Adam, if he would not have despaired. I say not only these horrid consequences do follow, but this also will follow, that Adam's sin hath done some mischief, that the grace of Christ can never cure; and generation stains so much, that regeneration cannot wash it clean. Besides all this, if the natural corruption remains in the regenerate, and be properly a sin, then either God hates the regenerate, or loves the sinner, and when he dies he must enter into heaven, with that sin, which he cannot lay down but in the grave; as the vilest sinner lays down every sin; and then an unclean thing can go to heaven, or

else no man can. And lastly, to say that this natural corruption, though it be pardoned and mortified, yet still remains, and is still a sin, is perfect nonsense ; for if it be mortified, it is not, it hath no being ; if it is pardoned, it was indeed, but now is no sin ; for till a man can be guilty of sin without obligation to punishment, a sin cannot be a sin that is pardoned ; that is, if the obligation to punishment, or the guilt be taken away, a man is not guilty. Thus far, Madam, I hope, you will think I had reason.

One thing more I did and do reprove in their Westminster Articles ; and that is, that Original Sin, meaning our sin derived from Adam, is contrary to the law of God, and doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner ; binding him over to God's wrath, &c. that is, that the sin of Adam imputed to us is properly, formally, and inherently a sin. If it were properly a sin in us, *our sin*, it might indeed be damnable ; for every transgression of the divine commandment is so ; but because I have proved it cannot bring eternal damnation, I can as well argue thus ; this sin cannot justly bring us to damnation, therefore it is not properly a sin ; as to say, this is properly a sin, therefore it can bring us to damnation. Either of them both follows well ; but, because they cannot prove it to be a sin properly, or any other ways but by a limited imputation to certain purposes, they cannot say it infers damnation. But because I have proved, it cannot infer damnation, I can safely conclude, it is not formally, properly, and inherently a sin in us.

ON

## CONTENTMENT.

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FROM THE RULES AND EXERCISES OF HOLY LIVING.

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VIRTUES and discourses are like friends necessary in all fortunes ; but those are the best which are friends in our sadnesses ; and in this sense no man that is virtuous can be friendless ; nor hath any man reason to complain of the Divine Providence, or accuse the public disorder of things, or his own infelicity, since God hath appointed one remedy for all the evils in the world, and that is a contented spirit. For this alone makes a man pass through fire, and not be scorched ; through seas, and not be drowned ; through hunger and nakedness, and want nothing. For since all the evil in the world consists in the disagreeing between the object and the appetite, as when a man hath what he desires not, or desires what he hath not, or desires amiss ; he that composes his spirit to the present accident, hath variety of instances for his virtue, but none to trouble him because his desires enlarge not beyond his present fortune ; and a wise man is placed in the

variety of chances, like the nave or centre of a wheel in the midst of all the circumvolutions and changes of posture, without violence or change, save that it turns gently in compliance with its changed part, and is indifferent which part is up, and which is down ; for there is some virtue or other to be exercised whatever happens, either patience or thanksgiving, love or fear, moderation or humility, charity or contentedness, and they are every one of them in order to his great end and immortal felicity ; and beauty is not made by white or red, by black eyes and a round face, by a straight body and a smooth skin, but by a proportion to the fancy.

No rules can make amiability ; our minds and apprehensions make that ; and so is our felicity ; and we may be reconciled to poverty and a low fortune, if we suffer contentedness and the grace of God to make the proportion. For no man is poor that doth not think himself so.\* But if in a full fortune, with impatience he desires more, he proclaims his wants and his beggarly condition. But because this grace of contentedness was the sum of all the old moral philosophy, and a great duty in Christianity, and of most universal use in the whole course of our lives, and the only instrument to ease the burthens of the world, and the enmities of sad chances, it will not be amiss to press it by the proper arguments, by which God hath bound it upon our spirits, it being fastened by reason

\* Non facta tibi est, si dissimules, injuria.

and religion, by duty and interest, by necessity and conveniency, by example, and by the proposition of excellent rewards, no less than peace and felicity.

1. Contentedness in all estates is a duty of religion ; it is the great reasonableness of complying with the Divine Providence, which governs all the world, and hath so ordered us in the administration of his great family. He were a strange fool, that should be angry because dogs and sheep need no shoes, and yet himself is full of care to get some. God hath supplied those needs to them by natural provisions, and to thee by an artificial ; for he hath given thee reason to learn a trade, or some means to make or buy them, so that it only differs in the manner of our provision ; and which had you rather want, shoes or reason ? And my patron, that hath given me a farm, is freer to me than if he gives a loaf ready baked. But however all these gifts come from him, and therefore it is fit he should dispense them as he pleases ; and if we murmur here, we may at the next melancholy be troubled, that God did not make us to be angels or stars. For if that, which we are or have, do not content us, we may be troubled for everything in the world, which is besides our being or our possessions.

God is the master of the scenes, we must not choose what part we shall act ; it concerns us only to be careful that we do it well, always saying, *If this please God, let it be as it is* ; and we who pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, must re-

member, that the angels do whatsoever is commanded them, and go wherever they are sent, and refuse no circumstances ; and if their employment be crossed by a higher degree, they sit down in peace, and rejoice in the event ; and when the angel of Judea could not prevail in behalf of the people committed to his charge, because the angel of Persia opposed it, he only told the story at the command of God, and was as content, and worshipped with as great an ecstasy in his proportion, as the prevailing Spirit.\* Do thou so likewise ; keep the station where God hath placed you, and you shall never long for things without, but sit at home feasting upon the Divine Providence and thy own reason, by which we are taught that it is necessary and reasonable to submit to God.

For, is not all the world God's family ? Are not we his creatures ? Are we not as clay in the hand of the potter ? Do we not live upon his meat, and move by his strength, and do our work by his light ? Are we anything but what we are from him ? And shall there be a mutiny among the flocks and herds, because their lord or the Shepherd chooses their pastures, and suffers them not to wander into deserts and unknown ways ? If we choose, we do it so foolishly that we cannot like it long, and most commonly not at all ; but God, who can do what he pleases, is wise to choose safely for us, affectionately to comply with our needs, and powerful to execute all his wise decrees. Here

\* Dan. x. 13.



therefore is the wisdom of the contented man, to let God choose for him; for when we have given up our wills to him, and stand in that station of the battle, where our great General hath placed us, our spirits must needs rest, while our conditions have for their security the power, the wisdom, and the charity of God.

2. Contentedness in all accidents brings great peace of spirit, and is the great and only instrument of temporal felicity. It removes the sting from the accident, and makes a man not depend upon chance, and the uncertain dispositions of men, for his wellbeing, but only on God and his own spirit. We ourselves make our fortunes good or bad, and when God lets loose a tyrant upon us, or a sickness, or scorn, or a lessened fortune, if we fear to die, or know not to be patient, or are proud, or covetous, then the calamity sits heavy on us. But if we know how to manage a noble principle, and fear not death so much as a dishonest action, and think impatience a worse evil than a fever, and pride to be the biggest disgrace, and poverty to be infinitely desirable before the torments of covetousness, then we who now think vice to be so easy, and make it so familiar, and think the cure so impossible, shall quickly be of another mind, and reckon these accidents among things eligible.

But no man can be happy, that hath great hopes and great fears of things without, and events depending upon other men, or upon the chances of fortune. The rewards of virtue are certain, and our provisions for

our natural support are certain, or if we want meat till we die, then to die of that disease, and there are many worse than to die with an atrophy or consumption, or unapt and courser nourishment. But he that suffers a transporting passion, concerning things within the power of others, is free from sorrow and amazement no longer than his enemy shall give him leave; and it is ten to one, but he shall be smitten then and there where it shall most trouble him; for so the adder teaches us where to strike, by her curious and fearful defending of her head.

The old stoics, when you told them of a sad story, would still answer, *Τί πρός μέ;* *What is that to me?* Yes, for the tyrant hath sentenced you also unto prison. Well, what is that? He will put a chain upon my leg, but he cannot bind my soul. No, but he will kill you. Then I'll die. If presently, let me go, that I may presently be freer than himself; but if not till anon, or tomorrow, I will dine first, or sleep, or do what reason and nature calls for, as at other times. This, in Gentile philosophy, is the same with the discourse of St Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both how to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need."\*

\* Phil. iv, 11, 12. 1 Tim. vi, 6. Heb. iii, 1, 2. Chi bene mal non puo soffrir, à grand honor non puo venir.

We are in the world like men playing at tables, the chance is not in our power, but to play it is ; and when it is fallen, we must manage it as we can ; and let nothing trouble us, but when we do a base action, or speak like a fool, or think wickedly ; these things God hath put into our powers ; but concerning those things, which are wholly in the choice of another, they cannot fall under our deliberation, and therefore neither are they fit for our passions. My fear may make me miserable, but it cannot prevent what another hath in his power and purpose ; and prosperities can only be enjoyed by them, who fear not at all to lose them, since the amazement and passion concerning the future take off all the pleasure of the present possession. Therefore, if thou hast lost thy land, do not also lose thy constancy ; and if thou must die a little sooner, yet do not die impatiently. For no chance is evil to him that is content, and “to a man nothing is miserable, unless it be unreasonable.” No man can make another man to be his slave, unless he hath first enslaved himself to life and death, to pleasure or pain, to hope or fear ; command these passions, and you are freer than the Parthian kings.

Upon the strength of the premises, we may reduce this virtue to practice by its *proper instruments* first, and then by some more *special considerations or arguments of content*.

1. When anything happens to our displeasure, let us endeavour to take off its trouble by turning it into spir-

itual or artificial advantage, and handle it on that side in which it may be useful to the designs of reason. For there is nothing but hath a double handle, or at least we have two hands to apprehend it. When an enemy reproaches us, let us look on him as an impartial relater of our faults, for he will tell thee truer than thy fond friend will ; and thou mayest call them precious balm, though they break thy head, and forgive his anger while thou makest use of the plainness of his declamation. “The ox when he is weary treads surest ;” and if there be nothing else in the disgrace, but that it makes us to walk warily, and tread sure for fear of our enemies, that is better than to be flattered into pride and carelessness. This is the charity of Christian philosophy, which expounds the sense of the Divine Providence fairly, and reconciles us to it by a charitable construction ; and we may as well refuse all physic, if we consider it only as unpleasant in the taste ; and we may find fault with the rich valleys of Tharsus, because they are circled by sharp mountains ; but so also we may be in charity with every unpleasant accident, because though it taste bitter, it is intended for health and medicine.

If therefore thou fallest from thy employment in public, take sanctuary in an honest retirement, being indifferent to thy gain abroad, or thy safety at home. If thou art out of favour with thy prince, secure the favour of the King of kings, and then there is no harm come to thee. And when Zeno Citiensis lost all his

goods in a storm, he retired to the studies of philosophy, to his short cloak and a severe life, and gave thanks to fortune for his prosperous mischance. When the north wind blows hard, and it rains sadly, none but fools sit down in it and cry; wise people defend themselves against it with a warm garment, or a good fire, and a dry roof; when a storm of a sad mischance beats upon our spirits, turn it into some advantage, by observing where it can serve another end, either of religion or prudence, or more safety or less envy; it will turn into something that is good, if we list to make it so; at least it may make us weary of the world's vanity, and take off our confidence from uncertain riches; and make our spirits to dwell in those regions, where content dwells essentially.

If it does any good to our souls, it hath made more than sufficient recompense for all the temporal affliction. He that threw a stone at a dog, and hit his cruel stepmother, said, that although he intended it otherwise, yet the stone was not quite lost; and if we fail in the first design, if we bring it home to another equally to content us, or more to profit us, then we have put our conditions past the power of chance; and this was called in the old Greek comedy, a being revenged on fortune by becoming philosophers, and turning the chance into reason or religion; for so a wise man shall overrule his stars, and have a greater influence upon his own content, than all the constellations and planets of the firmament.

2. Never compare thy condition with those above thee ; but to secure thy content, look upon those thousands with whom thou wouldst not for any interest change thy fortune and condition. A soldier must not think himself unprosperous, if he be not successful as the son of Philip, or cannot grasp a fortune as big as the Roman empire. Be content that thou art not lessened as was Pyrrhus ; or if thou beest, that thou art not routed like Crassus ; and when that comes to thee, it is a great prosperity that thou art not caged and mad, a spectacle like Bajazet, or thy eyes were not pulled out like Zedekiah's, or that thou wert not flayed alive like Valentinian. If thou admirest the greatness of Xerxes, look also on those that digged the mountain Atho, or whose ears and noses were cut off, because the Hellespont carried away the bridge. It is a fine thing thou thinkest, to be carried on men's shoulders ; but give God thanks that thou art not forced to carry a rich fool upon thy shoulders, as those poor men do whom thou beholdest. There are but a few kings in mankind, but many thousands who are very miserable if compared to thee ; however, it is a huge folly rather to grieve for the good of others, than to rejoice for that good which God hath given us of our own.

And yet there is no wise or good man, that would change persons or conditions entirely with any man in the world. It may be he would have one man's wealth added to himself, or the power of a second, or the learning of a third ; but still he would receive

these into his own person, because he loves that best, and therefore esteems it best, and therefore overvalues all that which he is, before all that which any other man in the world can be. Would any be Dives to have his wealth, or Judas for his office, or Saul for his kingdom, or Absalom for his bounty, or Architophel for his policy? It is likely he would wish all these, and yet he would be the same person still. For every man hath desires of his own, and objects just fitted to them, without which he cannot be, unless he were not himself. And let every man that loves himself so well as to love himself before all the world, consider if he have not something for which, in the whole, he values himself far more than he can value any man else. There is therefore no reason to take the finest feathers from all the winged nation, to deck that bird that thinks already she is more valuable, than any one of the inhabitants of the air. Either change all or none. Cease to love yourself best, or be content with that portion of being and blessing, for which you love yourself so well.

3. It conduces much to our content, if we pass by those things which happen to our trouble, and consider that which is pleasing and prosperous, that by the representation of the better, the worse may be blotted out; and at the worst you have enough to keep you alive, and to keep up and to improve your hopes of heaven. If I be overthrown in my suit at law, yet my house is left me still and my land; or I have a virtuous

wife, or hopeful children, or kind friends, or good hopes. If I have lost one child, it may be I have two or three still left me. Or else reckon the blessings, which already you have received, and therefore be pleased, in the change and variety of affairs, to receive “evil from the hand of God as well as good.” Antipater of Tarsus, used this art to support his sorrows on his death bed, and reckoned the good things of his past life (not forgetting to recount it as a blessing) an argument, that God took care of him, that he had a prosperous journey from Cilicia to Athens. Or else, please thyself with hopes of a future;\* for we were born with this sadness upon us; and it was a change that brought us into it, and a change may bring us out again. “Harvest will come, and then every farmer is rich, at least for a month or two.”† It may be thou art entered into the cloud, which will bring a gentle shower to refresh thy sorrows.

Now suppose thyself in as great a sadness, as ever did load thy spirit, wouldst thou not bear it cheerfully and nobly, if thou wert sure that within a certain space some strange excellent fortune would relieve thee, and enrich thee, and recompense thee, so as to overflow all thy hopes, and thy desires, and capacities? Now then, when a sadness lies heavy upon thee, remember that thou art a Christian, designed to the inheritance of

\* *La speranza è il pan de poveri.*  
*Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit.*

† *Δεῖ γεωργὸς εἰς νέετα πλούσιος.*



Jesus; and what dost thou think concerning thy great fortune, thy lot and portion of eternity? Dost thou think thou shalt be saved or damned? Indeed, if thou thinkest thou shalt perish, I cannot blame thee to be sad, sad till thy heart strings crack; but then why art thou troubled at the loss of thy money? What should a damned man do with money, which in so great a sadness, it is impossible for him to enjoy? Did ever any man upon the rack afflict himself, because he had received a cross answer from his mistress? or call for the particulars of a purchase upon the gallows? If thou dost really believe thou shalt be damned, I do not say it will cure the sadness of thy poverty, but it will swallow it up.

But if thou believest thou shalt be saved, consider how great is that joy, how infinite is that change, how unspeakable is the glory, how excellent is the recompense for all the sufferings in the world, if they were all laden upon thy spirit; so that let thy condition be what it will, if thou considerest thy own present condition, and comparest it to thy future possibility, thou canst not feel the present smart of a cross fortune to any great degree, either because thou hast a far bigger sorrow, or a far bigger joy. Here thou art but a stranger travelling to thy country, where the glories of a kingdom are prepared for thee; it is therefore a huge folly to be much afflicted, because thou hast a less convenient inn to lodge in by the way.

But these arts of looking backwards and forwards, are more than enough to support the Spirit of a Christian; there is no man but hath blessings enough in present possession, to outweigh the evils of a great affliction. Tell the joints of thy body, and do not accuse the universal Providence for a lame leg, or the want of a finger, when all the rest is perfect, and you have a noble soul, a particle of divinity, the image of God himself; and by the want of a finger you may the better know how to estimate the remaining parts, and to account for every degree of the surviving blessings. Aristippus, in a great suit of law, lost a farm, and, to a gentleman, who in civility pitied and deplored his loss, he answered, *I have two farms left still, and that is more than I have lost; and more than you have by one.* If you miss an office, for which you stood candidate, then, besides that you are quit of the cares and the envy of it, you still have all these excellencies, which rendered you capable to receive it, and they are better than the best office in the commonwealth. If your estate be lessened, you need the less to care who governs the province, whether he be rude or gentle.

I am crossed in my journey, and yet I escaped robbers; and I consider, that if I had been set upon by villains, I would have redeemed that evil by this which I now suffer, and have counted it a deliverance; or if I did fall into the hands of thieves, yet they did not steal my land. Or I have fallen into the hands of

the publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me. What now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse; and, unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience; they still have left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the Gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too; and still I sleep and digest; I eat and drink; I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights, that is in virtue and wisdom. in the whole creation, and in God himself.

And he that hath so many causes of joy, and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loses all these pleasures, and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns. Such a person were fit to bear Nero company, in his funeral sorrow for the loss of one of Poppea's hairs, or help to mourn for Lesbia's sparrow; and because he loves it, he deserves to starve in the midst of plenty, and to want comfort while he is encircled with blessings.

4. Enjoy the present, whatsoever it be, and be not solicitous for the future;\* for if you take your foot

\* Quid sit futurum cras fuge quærere, et  
 Quem sors dierum cunque dabit, lucro  
 Appone. Hor. l. i. Od. 9.

from the present standing, and thrust it forward toward tomorrow's event, you are in a restless condition; it is like refusing to quench your present thirst, by fearing you shall want drink the next day. If it be well to day, it is madness to make the present miserable, by fearing it may be ill tomorrow; when your belly is full of today's dinner, to fear you shall want the next day's supper; for it may be you shall not; and then to what purpose was this day's affliction? But if tomorrow you shall want, your sorrow will come time enough, though you do not hasten it; let your trouble tarry till its own day comes. But if it chance to be ill to day, do not increase it by the care of tomorrow.\*

Enjoy the blessings of this day, if God sends them, and the evils of it bear patiently and sweetly; for this day is only ours, we are dead to yesterday, and we are not born to the morrow. He therefore that enjoys the present, if it be good, enjoys as much as is possible; and if only that day's trouble leans upon him, it is singular and finite; "Sufficient to the day," said Christ, "is the evil thereof." Sufficient, but not intolerable. But if we look abroad, and bring into one day's thoughts, the evil of many, certain, and uncertain, what will be and what will never be, our load will be as intolerable

\* *Prudens futuri temporis exitum*

*Caliginosâ nocte premit Deus;*

*Ridetque si mortalis ultra*

*Fas trepidat; quod adest, memento*

*Componere æquus. Hor. l. iii. Od. 29.*

as it is unreasonable. To reprove this instrument of discontent, the ancients feigned, that in hell stood a man twisting a rope of hay, and still he twisted on, suffering an ass to eat up all that was finished ; so miserable is he who thrusts his passions forwards towards future events, and suffers all that he may enjoy, to be lost and devoured by folly and inconsideration, thinking nothing fit to be enjoyed but that which is not, or cannot be had. Just so, many young persons are loth to die, and therefore desire to live to old age, and when they are come hither, are troubled that they are come to that state of life, to which, before they were come, they were hugely afraid they should never come.

5. Let us prepare our minds against changes, always expecting them, that we be not surprised when they come ; for nothing is so great an enemy to tranquillity and a contented spirit, as the amazement and confusions of unreadiness and inconsideration ; and when our fortunes are violently changed, our spirits are unchanged, if they always stood in the suburbs and expectation of sorrows. “O Death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in his possessions !” And to the rich man, who had promised to himself ease and fulness for many years, it was a sad arrest, that his soul was surprised the first night ; but the Apostles, who every day knocked at the gate of death, and looked upon it continually, went to martyrdom in peace and evenness.

6. Let us often frame to ourselves, and represent to our considerations the images of those blessings we have, just as we usually understand them, when we want them. Consider how desirable health is to a sick man, or liberty to a prisoner ; but if but a fit of the toothache seizes us with violence, all those troubles, which in our health afflicted us, disband instantly and seem inconsiderable. He that in his health is troubled that he is in debt, and spends sleepless nights, and refuses meat because of his infelicity, let him fall into a fit of the stone or a high fever, he despises the arrest of all his first troubles, and is a man unconcerned. Remember then that God hath given thee a blessing, the want of which is infinitely more trouble than thy present debt, or poverty, or loss ; and therefore is now more to be valued in the possession, and ought to outweigh thy trouble.

The very privative blessings, the blessings of immunity, safeguard, liberty, and integrity, which we commonly enjoy, deserve the thanksgiving of a whole life. If God should send a cancer upon thy face, or a wolf into thy side, if he should spread a crust of leprosy upon thy skin, what wouldst thou give to be but as now thou art ? Wouldest thou not on that condition be as poor as I am, or as the meanest of thy brethren ? Would you not choose your present loss or affliction, as a thing extremely eligible, and a redemption to thee, if thou mightest exchange the other for this ? Thou art quit from a thousand calamities, every one of which,

if it were upon thee, would make thee insensible of thy present sorrow ; and therefore let thy joy, which should be as great for thy freedom from them, as is thy sadness when thou feelest any of them, do the same cure upon thy discontent. For if we be not extremely foolish or vain, thankless or senseless, a great joy is more apt to cure sorrow and discontent, than a great trouble is.

I have known an affectionate wife, when she had been in fear of parting with her beloved husband, heartily desire of God his life or society upon any conditions that were not sinful ; and choose to beg with him rather than to feast without him ; and the same person hath upon that consideration borne poverty nobly, when God hath heard her prayer in the other matter. What wise man in the world is there, who does not prefer a small fortune with peace, before a great one with contention, and war, and violence ! And then he is no longer wise, if he alters his opinion when he hath his wish.

7. If you will secure a contented spirit, you must measure your desires by your fortune and condition, not your fortunes by your desires ; that is, be governed by your needs, not by your fancy ; by nature, not by evil customs and ambitious principles. He that would shoot an arrow out of a plough, or hunt a hare with an elephant, is not unfortunate for missing the mark or prey ; but he is foolish for choosing such unapt instruments ; and so is he that runs after his content with

appetites, not springing from natural seeds, but from physical, fantastical, and violent necessities. These are not to be satisfied; or, if they were, a man hath chosen an evil instrument towards his content; nature did not intend rest to a man, by filling of such desires. Is that beast better, that hath two or three mountains to graze on, than a little bee that feeds on dew or manna, and lives upon what falls every morning from the store-houses of heaven, clouds, and providence? Can a man quench his thirst better out of a river than a full urn; or drink better from the fountain when it is finely paved with marble, than when it swells over the green turf? Pride and artificial gluttonies do but adulterate nature, making our diet healthless, our appetites impatient and unsatisfiable, and the taste mixed, fantastic and meretricious.

But that, which we miscall poverty, is indeed nature; and its proportions are the just measures of a man, and the best instruments of content. But when we create needs, that God or nature never made, we have erected to ourselves an infinite stock of trouble, that can have no period. Sempronius complained of want of clothes, and was much troubled for a new suit, being ashamed to appear in the theatre with his gown a little threadbare; but when he got it, and gave his old clothes to Codrus, the poor man was ravished with joy, and went and gave God thanks for his new purchase; and Codrus was made richly fine, and cheerfully warm, by that which Sempronius was ashamed to wear; and yet



their natural needs were both alike ; the difference only was, that Sempronius had some artificial and fantastical necessities superinduced, which Codrus had not ; and was harder to be relieved, and could not have joy at so cheap a rate ; because he only lived according to nature, the other by pride and ill customs, and measures taken by other men's eyes, and tongues, and artificial needs. He that propounds to his fancy things greater than himself or his needs, and is discontented and troubled when he fails of such purchases, ought not to accuse providence, or blame his fortune, but his folly. God and nature made no more needs than they mean to satisfy ; and he that will make more must look for satisfaction where he can.

8. In all troubles and sadder accidents let us take sanctuary in religion, and by innocence cast out anchors for our souls, to keep them from shipwreck, though they be not kept from storm.\* For what philosophy shall comfort a villain, that is hauled to the rack for murdering his prince, or that is broken upon the wheel for sacrilege ? His cup is full of pure and unmingled sorrow ; his body is rent with torment, his name with ignominy, his soul with shame and sorrow, which are to last eternally. But when a man suffers in a good cause, and is afflicted, and yet walks not perversely with his God, then " Anytus and Melitus may kill me, but they cannot hurt me ;" Cor. iv. 8, 9. Then St Paul's characters are

\* *Vacare culpâ in calamitatibus maximum solatium.*

engraven in the forehead of our fortune ; “ We are troubled on every side, but not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed. And who is he, that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ? ” 1 Pet iii, 13, and iv. 15, 16. For indeed everything in the world is indifferent, but sin ; and all the scorplings of the sun are very tolerable, in respect of the burnings of a fever or a calenture.

The greatest evils are from within us, and from ourselves also we must look for our greatest good ; for God is the fountain of it, but reaches it to us by our own hand ; and when all things look sadly round about us, then only we shall find how excellent a fortune it is, to have God to our friend ; and of all friendships, that only is created to support us in our needs. For it is sin, that turns an ague into a fever, and a fever to the plague, fear into despair, anger into rage, and loss into madness, and sorrow to amazement and confusion ; but if either we were innocent, or else by the sadness are made penitent, we are put to school, or into the theatre, either to learn how, or else actually to combat for a crown ; the accident may serve an end of mercy, but is not a messenger of wrath.

Let us not therefore be governed by external, and present, and seeming things ; nor let us make the same judgment of things, that common and weak understandings do ; nor make other men, and they not the wisest, to be judges of our felicity, so that we be happy

or miserable as they please to think us ; but let reason, and experience, and religion, and hope, relying on the divine promises, be the measure of our judgment. No wise man did ever describe felicity without virtue ;\* and no good man did ever think virtue could depend upon the variety of a good or bad fortune. It is no evil to be poor, but to be vicious and impatient.

To these exercises and spiritual instruments, if we add the following *considerations concerning the nature and circumstance of human chance*, we may better secure our peace. For as to children, who are afraid of vain images, we used to persuade confidence by making them to handle and look near such things, that when in such a familiarity they perceive them innocent, they may overcome their fears ; so must timorous, fantastical, sad, and discontented persons be treated ; they must be made to consider, and on all sides to look upon the accident, and to take all its dimensions, and consider its consequences, and to behold the purpose of God, and the common mistakes of men, and their evil sentences they usually pass upon them. For then we shall perceive that, like colts of unmanaged horses, we start at dead bones and lifeless blocks, things that are inactive as they are innocent. But if we secure our hopes and our fears, and make them moderate and within government, we may the

\* *Beatitudo pendet à rectis consiliis in affectionem animi constantem desinentibus. Plut.*

sooner overcome the evil of the accident ; for nothing that we feel, is so bad as what we fear.

1. Consider that the universal providence of God hath so ordered it, that the good things of nature and fortune are divided, that we may know how to bear our own, and relieve each other's wants and imperfections. It is not for a man, but for a God, to have all excellencies, and all felicities. He supports my poverty with his wealth ; I council and instruct him with my learning and experience. He hath many friends, I many children ; he hath no heir, I have no inheritance ; and any one great blessing together with the common portions of nature and necessity is a fair fortune, if it be but health, or strength, or the swiftness of Ahimaaz.\* For it is an unreasonable discontent to be troubled, that I have not so good cocks, or dogs, or horses, as my neighbour, being more troubled that I want one thing that I need not, than thankful for having received all that I need. Nero had this disease, that he was not content with the fortune of the whole empire, but put the fiddlers to death for being more skilful in the trade than he was ; and Dionysius the elder, was so angry at Philoxenus for singing, and with Plato for disputing better than he did, that he sold Plato a slave into Ægina, and condemned the other to the quarries.

\* Non te ad omnia læta genuit, O Agamemnon, Atreus. Opus est te gaudere, et mœrere ; Mortalis enim natus es, et, ut haud velis, Superi sic constituerunt.

This consideration is to be enlarged by adding to it, that there are some instances of fortune and a fair condition, that cannot stand with some others, but if you desire this, you must lose that, and unless you be content with one, you lose the comfort of both. If you covet learning, you must have leisure and a retired life ; if to be a politician, you must go abroad and get experience, and do all businesses, and keep all company, and have no leisure at all. If you will be rich, you must be frugal ; if you will be popular, you must be bountiful, if a philosopher, you must despise riches. The Greek, that designed to make the most exquisite picture that could be imagined, fancied the eye of Chione, and the hair of Pægnium, and Tarsia's lip, Philenium's chin, and the forehead of Delphia, and set all these upon Melphidippa's neck, and thought that he should outdo both art and nature. But when he came to sew the proportions, he found that what was excellent in Tarsia, did not agree with the other excellency of Philenium ; and although singly they were rare pieces, yet in the whole they made a most ugly face.

The dispersed excellencies and blessings of many men, if given to one, would not make a handsome, but a monstrous fortune. Use therefore that faculty, which nature hath given thee, and thy education hath made actual, and thy calling hath made a duty. But if thou desirest to be a saint, refuse not his persecution ; if thou would be famous as Epaminondas, or Fabricius, accept also of their poverty ; for that added lustre to their

persons, and envy to their fortune, and their virtue without it could not have been so excellent. Let Euphorion sleep quietly with his old rich wife ; and let Medius drink on with Alexander ; and remember thou canst not have the riches of the first, unless you have the old wife too ; nor the favour which the second had with his prince, unless you buy it at his price, that is, lay thy sobriety down at first, and thy health a little after ; and then their condition, though it look splendidly, yet when you handle it on all sides, it will prick your fingers.\*

2. Consider how many excellent personages, in all ages, have suffered as great or greater calamities than this, which now tempts thee to impatience. Agis was the most noble of the Greeks, and yet his wife bore a child by Alcibiades ; and Philip was prince of Ituræa, and yet his wife ran away with his brother Herod into Galilee ; and certainly in a great fortune, that was a great calamity ; but these are but single instances. Almost all the ages of the world have noted, that their most eminent scholars were most eminently poor, some by choice, but most by chance, and an inevitable decree of providence. And in the whole sex of women, God hath decreed the sharpest pains of childbirth, to shew that there is no state exempt from sorrow, and yet that the weakest persons have strength more than enough

\* Prandet Aristotles quando Philippo lubet, Diogenes quando Diogeni.

to bear the greatest evil; and the greatest queens, and the mothers of Saints and Apostles, have no character of exemption from this sad sentence.

But the Lord of men and angels was also the King of sufferings, and if thy coarse robe trouble thee, remember the swaddling clothes of Jesus; if thy bed be uneasy, yet it is not worse than his manger; and it is no sadness to have a thin table, if thou callest to mind that the King of Heaven and earth was fed with a little breastmilk; and yet besides this, he suffered all the sorrows which we deserved. We therefore have great reason to sit down upon our hearths, and warm ourselves at our own fires, and feed upon content at home; for it were a strange pride to expect to be more gently treated by the divine providence, than the best and wisest men, than Apostles and Saints, nay, the Son of the Eternal God, and heir of both the worlds.

This consideration may be enlarged, by surveying all the states and families of the world;\* and he that at once saw Ægina and Magera, Pyreus and Corinth, lie gasping in their ruins, and almost buried in their own heaps, had reason to blame Cicero for mourning impatiently the death of one woman. In the most beauteous and splendid fortune, there are many cares and proper interruptions and allays; in the fortune of a prince there is not the coarse robe of beggary;

\* Servius Sulpitius.

but there are infinite cares; and the judge sits upon the tribunal with great ceremony and ostentation of fortune, and yet at his house, or in his breast, there is something that causes him to sigh deeply.\* Pittacus was a wise and valiant man, but his wife overthrew the table when he had invited friends; upon which the good man, to excuse her incivility and his own misfortune, said, that every man had one evil, and he was most happy that he had but that alone. And if nothing else happens, yet sicknesses so often embitter the fortune and content of a family, that a physician in a few years, and with the practice upon a very few families, gets experience enough to administer to almost all diseases. And when thy little misfortune troubles thee, remember that thou hast known the best of Kings, and the best of men, put to death publicly by his own subjects.

3. There are many accidents which are esteemed great calamities; and yet we have reason enough to bear them well and unconcernedly; for they neither touch our bodies nor our souls; our health and our virtue remain entire, our life and our reputation. It may be I am slighted, or I have received ill language;

\* *Hic in foro beatus esse creditur,  
 Cùm foribus apertis sit suis miserrimus;  
 Imperat mulier, jubet omnia, semper litigat.  
 Multa adferunt illi dolorem, nihil mihi.  
 Ferre quam sortem patiuntur omnes,  
 Nemo recusat.*



but my head aches not for it, neither hath it broke my thigh, nor taken away my virtue, unless I lose my charity or my patience. Inquire therefore, what you are the worse, either in your soul, or in your body, for what hath happened; for upon this very stock many evils will disappear, since the body and the soul make up the whole man. And when the daughter of Stilpo proved a wanton, he said, it was none of his sin, and therefore there was no reason it should be his misery.\* And if an enemy hath taken all that from a prince, whereby he was a king, he may refresh himself by considering all that is left him, whereby he is a man.

4. Consider that sad accidents, and a state of affliction is a school of virtue; it reduces our spirits to soberness, and our counsels to moderation; it corrects levity, and interrupts the confidence of sinning. "It is good for me," said David, "that I have been afflicted, for thereby I have learned thy law." And, "I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled," Psalm cxix, part 10, v. 3. For God, who in mercy and wisdom governs the world, would never have suffered so many sadnesses, and have sent them especially to the most virtuous and the wisest men, but that he intends they should be the seminary of comfort, the nursery of virtue, the exercise of wis-

\* Si natus es, Trophime, solus omnium hâc lege,  
 Ut semper eant tibi res arbitrio tuo;  
 Felicitatem hanc si quis promisit Deus,  
 Irasceres jure, si malâ is fide  
 Et improbe exgisset. *Menan.*

dom, the trial of patience, the venturing for a crown, and the gate of glory.

5. Consider that afflictions are oftentimes the occasions of great temporal advantages ; and we must not look upon them as they sit down heavily upon us, but as they serve some of God's ends, and the purposes of universal Providence. And when a prince fights justly, and yet unprosperously, if he could see all those reasons for which God hath so ordered it, he would think it the most unreasonable thing in the world, and that it would be very ill to have it otherwise. If a man could have opened one of the pages of the divine counsel, and could have seen the event of Joseph's being sold to the merchants of Amaleck, he might with much reason have dried up the young man's tears ; and when God's purposes are opened in the events of things, as it was in the case of Joseph, when he sustained his father's family, and became lord of Egypt, then we see what ill judgment we made of things, and that we were passionate as children, and transported with sense and mistaken interest. The case of Themistocles was almost like that of Joseph, for, being banished into Egypt, he also grew in favour with the king, and told his wife, he had been undone, unless he had been undone. For God esteems it one of his glories, that he brings good out of evil ; and therefore it were but reason we should trust God, to govern his own world as he pleases ; and that we should patiently wait till the change cometh, or the reason be discovered.

And this consideration is also of great use to them,

who envy the prosperity of the wicked, and the success of the persecutors, and the baits of fishes, and the bread of dogs. God fails not to sow blessings in the long furrows, which the plowers plow upon the back of the Church; and this success, which troubles us, will be a great glory to God, and a great benefit to his saints and servants, and a great ruin to the persecutors, who shall have but the fortune of Theramenes, one of the thirty tyrants of Athens, who escaped when his house fell upon him, and was shortly after put to death with torments, by his colleagues in the tyranny.

To which also may be added, that the great evils, which happen to the best and wisest of men, are one of the great arguments, upon the strength of which we can expect felicity to our souls, and the joys of another world. And certainly they are then very tolerable and eligible, when with so great advantages they minister to the faith and hope of a Christian. But if we consider what unspeakable tortures are provided for the wicked to all eternity, we should not be troubled to see them prosperous here, but rather wonder that their portion in this life is not bigger, and that ever they should be sick, or crossed, or affronted, or troubled with the contradiction and disease of their own vices, since if they were fortunate beyond their own ambition, it could not make them recompense for one hour's torment in hell, which yet they shall have for their eternal portion.

After all these considerations, deriving from sense and experience, grace and reason, there are two remedies still remaining, and they are necessity and time,

6. For it is but reasonable to bear that accident patiently which God sends, since impatience does but entangle us, like the fluttering of a bird in a net, but cannot at all ease our trouble, or prevent the accident ; it must be run through, and therefore it were better we compose ourselves to a patient, than to a troubled and miserable suffering.\*

7. But however, if you will not otherwise be cured, time at last will do it alone ; and then consider, do you mean to mourn always, or but for a time ? If always, you are miserable and foolish. If for a time, then why will not you apply those reasons to your grief at first, with which you will cure it at last ? Or if you will not cure it with reason, see how little of a man there is in you, that you suffer time to do no more with you than reason or religion. You suffer yourselves to be cured, just as a beast or a tree is ; let it alone, and the thing will heal itself ; but this is neither honourable to thy person, nor of reputation to thy religion. However, be content to bear thy calamity, because thou art sure in a little time, it will sit down gentle and easy ; for to a mortal man, no evil is immortal. And here let the worst thing happen that can, it will end in death, and we commonly think that to be near enough.

8. Lastly, of those things which are reckoned amongst evils, some are better than their contraries ; and to a good man, the very worst is tolerable.

\* *Nemo recusat ferre quod necesse est pati,*

THE  
VANITY AND SHORTNESS  
OF  
HUMAN LIFE.

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FROM THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY DYING.

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A MAN is a bubble, said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents with advantages, and its proper circumstances, to this purpose, saying, all the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles descending *à Jove pluvio*, from God and the dew of heaven, from a tear and drop of rain, from nature and providence; and some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having had no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die, others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others; and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed with a great drop of a cloud, sink into flatness and a

froth ; the change not being great, it being hardly possible it should be more a nothing than it was before.

So is every man ; he is born in vanity and sin ; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn unto dust and forgetfulness ; some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad and very sorrowful ; others ride longer in the storm ; it may be until seven years of vanity be expired, and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads, and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death and darkness of the grave to hide them. But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, of a careless nurse, of drowning in a pail of water, of being overlaid by a sleepy servant, or such little accidents, then the young man dances like a bubble empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck, or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colours are fantastical ; and so he dances out the gaiety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill placed humour ; and to preserve a man alive, in the midst of so many chances and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him ; to preserve him from

rushing into nothing, and at first to draw him up from nothing, were equally the issues of an Almighty power.

And therefore the wise men of the world have contended, who shall best fit man's condition with words signifying his vanity and short abode. Homer calls a man a *leaf*, the smallest, the weakest piece of a short lived, unsteady plant. Pindar calls him *the dream of a shadow*; another *the dream of a shadow of smoke*. But St James spake by a more excellent spirit, saying, *our life is but a vapour*, viz. drawn from the earth by a celestial influence, made of smoke, or the lighter parts of water, tossed with every wind, moved by the motion of a superior body, without virtue in itself, lifted up on high, or left below, according as it pleases the sun, its fosterfather. But it is lighter yet. It is but *appearing*; a fantastic vapour, an apparition, nothing real; it is not so much as a mist, not the matter of a shower, nor substantial enough to make a cloud; but it is like Cassiopeia's chair, or Pelop's shoulder, or the circles of heaven, *γαυρόμενα*, for which you cannot have a word, that can signify a verier nothing.

And yet the expression is one degree more made diminutive; *a vapour*, and *phantastical*, or a *mere appearance*, and this but *for a little while* neither; the very dream, the phantasm disappears in a small time, *like the shadow that departeth*, or, *like a tale that is told*, or *as a dream when one awaketh*. A man is so vain, so unfixed, so perishing a creature, that he cannot long last in the scene of fancy; a man goes off, and is

forgotten like the dream of a distracted person. The sum of all is this ; *that thou art a man*, than whom there is not in the world any greater instance of heights and declensions, of lights and shadows, of misery and folly, of laughter and tears, of groans and death.

And because this consideration is of great usefulness, and great necessity to many purposes of wisdom and the spirit ; all the succession of time, all the changes in nature, all the varieties of light and darkness, the thousand thousands of accidents in the world, and every contingency to every man, and to every creature, doth preach our funeral sermon, and calls us to look and see how the old sexton, *Time*, throws up the earth, and digs a grave, where we must lay our sins or our sorrows, and sow our bodies, till they rise again in a fair, or in an intolerable eternity. Every revolution, which the sun makes about the world, divides between life and death ; and death possesses both those portions by the next morrow ; and we are dead to all those months, which we have already lived, and we shall never live them over again ; and still God makes little periods of our age.

First we change our world, when we are born, and feel the warmth of the sun. Then we sleep and enter into the image of death, in which state we are unconcerned in all the changes of the world ; and if our mothers or our nurses die, or a wild boar destroy our vineyards, or our king be sick, we regard it not, but during that state are as disinterested, as if our eyes



were closed with the clay, that weeps in the bowels of the earth. At the end of seven years, our teeth fall and die before us, representing a formal prologue to a tragedy ; and still every seven years it is odds but we shall finish the last scene ; and when nature, or chance, or vice, takes our body in pieces, weakening some parts and loosening others, *we taste the grave*, and the solemnities of our own funerals, first, in those parts that ministered to vice, and next, in them that served for ornament ; and in a short time, even they that served for necessity become useless, and entangled like the wheels of a broken clock.

Baldness is but a dressing to our funerals, the proper ornament of mourning, and of a person entered very far into the regions and possession of death ; and we have many more of the same signification ; grey hairs, rotten teeth, dim eyes, trembling joints, short breath, stiff limbs, wrinkled skin, short memory, decayed appetite. Every day's necessity calls for a reparation of that portion, which death fed on all night when we lay in his lap, and slept in his outer chambers. The very spirits of a man prey upon the daily portion of bread and flesh, and every meal is a rescue from one death, and lays up for another ; and while we think a thought we die ; and the clock strikes, and reckons on our portion of eternity ; we form our words with the breath of our nostrils, we have the less to live upon for every word we speak.

Thus nature calls us to meditate of death by those things, which are the instruments of acting it ; and God, by all the variety of his providence, makes us see death everywhere, in all variety of circumstances, and dressed up for all the fancies, and the expectation of every single person. Nature hath given us one harvest every year, but death hath two ; and the spring and the autumn send throngs of men and women to charnel houses ; and all the summer long, men are recovering from their evils of the spring, till the dogdays come, and the Syrian star makes the summer deadly ; and the fruits of autumn are laid up for all the year's provision, and the man that gathers them eats, and surfeits, and dies, and needs them not, and himself is laid up for eternity ; and he that escapes till winter, only stays for another opportunity, which the distempers of that quarter minister to him with great variety. Thus death reigns in all the portions of our time. The autumn with its fruits provides disorders for us, and the winter's cold turns them into sharp diseases, and the spring brings flowers to strew our hearse, and the summer gives green turf and brambles to bind upon our graves. Calentures and surfeit, cold and agues, are the four quarters of the year, they all minister to death ; and you can go no whither but to tread upon a dead man's bones.

The wild fellow in Petronius, that escaped upon a broken table from the furies of a shipwreck, as he was sunning himself upon the rocky shore, espied a man

rolling upon his floating bed of waves, ballasted with sand in the folds of his garment, and carried by his civil enemy, the sea, towards the shore to find a grave ; and it cast him into some sad thoughts ; that peradventure this man's wife in some part of the continent, safe and warm, looks next month for the good man's return ; or it may be his son knows nothing of the tempest ; or his father thinks of that affectionate kiss, which still is warm upon the good old man's cheek, ever since he took a kind farewell, and he weeps with joy to think how blessed he shall be, when his beloved boy returns into the circle of his father's arms. These are the thoughts of mortals, this the end and sum of all their designs ; a dark night and an ill guide, a boisterous sea and a broken cable, a hard rock and a rough wind, dashed in peices the fortune of a whole family, and they that shall weep loudest for the accident, are not yet entered into the storm, and yet have suffered shipwreck. Then looking upon the carcase, he knew it, and found it to be the master of the ship, who the day before cast up the accounts of his patrimony and his trade, and named the day when he thought to be at home. See how the man swims who was so angry two days since ; his passions are becalmed with the storm, his accounts cast up, his cares at an end, his voyage done, and his gains are the strange events of death ; which, whether they be good or evil, the men that are alive seldom trouble themselves concerning the interest of the dead.

But seas alone do not break our vessel in pieces ; everywhere we may be shipwrecked. A valiant general, when he is to reap the harvest of his crowns and triumphs, fights unprosperously, or falls into a fever with joy and wine, and changes his laurel into cypress, his triumphant chariot to an hearse ; dying the night before he was appointed to perish in the drunkenness of his festival joys. It was a sad arrest of the loosenesses and wilder feasts of the French court, when their king, Henry the Second, was killed really by the sportive image of a fight. And many brides have died under the hands of paranympths and maidens, dressing them for uneasy joy, the new and undiscerned chains of marriage, according to the saying of Ben-sirach the wise Jew, "The bride went into her chamber, and knew not what should befall her there." Some have been paying their vows, and giving thanks for a prosperous return to their own house, and the roof hath descended upon their heads, and turned their loud religion into the deeper silence of a grave. And how many teeming mothers have rejoiced, and pleased themselves in becoming the channels of blessing to a family ; and the midwife hath quickly bound their heads and feet, and carried them forth to burial ? Or else the birthday of an heir hath seen the coffin of the father brought into the house, and the divided mother hath been forced to travail twice, with a painful birth, and a sadder death.

There is no state, no accident, no circumstance of our life, but it hath been soured by some sad instance of a dying friend ; a friendly meeting often ends in some sad mischance, and makes an eternal parting ; and when the poet Æschylus was sitting under the walls of his house, an eagle hovering over his bald head mistook it for a stone, and let fall his oyster, hoping there to break the shell, but pierced the poor man's skull.

Death meets us everywhere, and is procured by every instrument, and in all chances, and enters in at many doors ; by violence and secret influence, by the aspect of a star and the scent of a mist, by the emissions of a cloud and the meeting of a vapour, by the fall of a chariot and the stumbling at a stone, by a full meal or an empty stomach, by watching at the wine or by watching at prayers, by the sun or the moon, by a heat or a cold, by sleepless nights or sleeping days, by water frozen into the hardness and sharpness of a dagger, or water thawed into the floods of a river, by a hair or a raisin, by violent motion or sitting still, by severity or dissolution, by God's mercy or God's anger, by everything in providence and everything in manners, by everything in nature, and by everything in chance. *Eripitur persona, manet res* ; we take pains to heap up things useful to our life, and get our death in the purchase ; and the person is snatched away, and the goods remain. And all this is the law and constitution of nature, it is a punishment to our sins, the un-

alterable event of providence, and the decree of heaven. The chains that confine us to this condition are strong as destiny, and immutable as the eternal laws of God.

I have conversed with some men, who rejoiced in the death or calamity of others, and accounted it as a judgment upon them for being on the other side, and against them in the contention ; but within the revolution of a few months, the same man met with a more uneasy and unhandsome death ; which when I saw, I wept, and was afraid ; for I knew that it must be so with all men, for we also shall die, and end our quarrels and contentions by passing to a final sentence.

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# CONSIDERATIONS

OF THE

## EVILS OF HUMAN LIFE.

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FROM THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY LIVING.

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THE sadnesses of this life help to sweeten the bitter cup of death. For let our life be never so long, if our strength were great as that of oxen and camels, if our sinews were strong as the cordage at the foot of an oak, if we were as fighting and prosperous people as Siccus Dentatus, who was on the prevailing side in an hundred and twenty battles, who had three hundred and twelve public rewards assigned him by his generals and princes, for his valour and conduct in sieges and sharp encounters, and, besides all this, had his share in nine triumphs; yet still the period shall be, that all this shall end in death, and the people shall talk of us awhile good or bad, according as we deserve, or as they please; and once it shall come to pass, that concerning every one of us it shall be told in the neighbourhood, that we are dead.

This we are apt to think a sad story ; but therefore let us help it with a sadder. For we therefore need not be much troubled, that we shall die ; because we are not here in ease, nor do we dwell in a fair condition, but our days are full of sorrow and anguish, dishonoured and made unhappy with many sins, with a frail and a foolish spirit, entangled with difficult cases of conscience, ensnared with passions, amused with fears, full of cares, divided with curiosities and contradictory interests, made airy and impertinent with vanities, abused with ignorance and prodigious errors, made ridiculous with a thousand weaknesses, worn away with labours, loaden with diseases, daily vexed with dangers and temptations, and in love with misery ; we are weakened with delights, afflicted with want, with the evils of myself and of all my family, and with the sadnesses of all my friends and of all good men, even of the whole church ; and therefore methinks we need not be troubled, that God is pleased to put an end to all these troubles, and to let them sit down in a natural period, which, if we please, may be to us the beginning of a better life.

When the prince of Persia wept, because his army should all die in the revolution of an age, Artabanus told him, that they should all meet with evils so many, and so great, that every man of them should wish himself dead long before that. Indeed, it were a sad thing to be cut of the stone, and we that are in health tremble to think of it ; but the man that is wearied with the



disease, looks upon that sharpness as upon his cure and remedy ; and as none need to have a tooth drawn, so none could well endure it, but he that hath felt the pain of it in his head. So is our life so full of evils, that therefore death is no evil to them, that have felt the smart of this, or hope for the joys of a better.

But as it helps to ease a certain sorrow, as a fire draws out fire, and a nail drives forth a nail ; so it instructs us in a present duty, that is, that we should not be so fond of a perpetual thorn, nor doat upon the transient gauds and gilded thorns of this world. They are not worth a passion, nor worth a sigh, nor a groan, nor of the price of one night's watching ; and therefore they are mistaken and miserable persons, who, since Adam planted thorns round about paradise, are more in love with the hedge, than with the fruits of the garden—sottish admirers of things that hurt them, of sweet poisons, gilded daggers, and silken halters. Tell them they have lost a bounteous friend, a rich purchase, a fair farm, a wealthy donative, and you dissolve their patience ; it is an evil bigger than their spirit can bear ; it brings sickness and death ; they can neither eat nor sleep with such a sorrow.

But if you represent to them the evils of a vicious habit, and the dangers of a state of sin ; if you tell them they have displeased God, and interrupted their hopes of heaven ; it may be they will be so civil as to hear it patiently, and to treat you kindly, and first to commend, and then forget your story ; because they

prefer this world, with all its sorrows, before the pure unmingled felicities of heaven. But it is strange, that any man should be so passionately in love with the thorns, which grow on his own ground, that he should wear them for amulets, and knit them in his shirt, and prefer them before a kingdom and immortality. No man loves this world the better for his being poor ; but men, that love it because they have great possessions, love it because it is troublesome and chargeable, full of noise and temptation, because it is unsafe and ungoverned, flattered and abused ; and he that considers the troubles of an over long garment, and of a crammed stomach, a trailing gown, and a loaden table, may justly understand, that all that for which men are so passionate is their hurt, and their objection, that which a temperate man would avoid, and a wise man cannot love.

He that is no fool, but can consider wisely, if he be in love with this world, we need not despair but that a witty man might reconcile him with tortures, and make him think charitably of the rack, and be brought to dwell with vipers and dragons, and entertain his guests with the shrieks of mandrakes, cats, and screech-owls, with the filing of iron, and the harshness of rending silk, or to admire the harmony, that is made by an herd of evening wolves, when they miss their draught of blood in their midnight revels. The groans of a man in a fit of the stone are worse than all these ; and the distractions of a troubled conscience are worse than

those groans ; and yet a careless merry sinner is worse than all that.

But if we could from one of the battlements of heaven, espy how many men and women at this time lie fainting and dying for want of bread, how many young men are hewn down by the sword of war, how many poor orphans are now weeping over the graves of their father, by whose life they were enabled to eat ; if we could but hear how many mariners and passengers are at this present in a storm, and shriek out because their keel dashes against a rock, or bulges under them, how many people there are that weep with want, and are mad with oppression, or are desperate by too quick a sense of a constant infelicity ; in all reason we should be glad to be out of the noise and participation of many evils. This is a place of sorrows and tears, of great evils and a constant calamity ; let us remove from hence, at least in affections and preparation of mind.

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# REMARKS

ON THE

## EFFECTS OF PREACHING.

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FROM THE DEDICATION OF A VOLUME OF SERMONS TO THE EARL  
OF CARBERRY.

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IT were well if men would not inquire after the learning of the Sermon, or its deliciousness to the ear of fancy, but observe its usefulness ; not what concerns the preacher, but what concerns themselves ; not what may make a vain reflection upon him, but what may substantially serve their own needs ; that the attending to his Discourses may not be spent in vain talk concerning him or his disparagements, but may be used as a duty and a part of religion, to minister to edification and instruction. When St John reckoned the principles of evil actions, he told but of three, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” But there was then also in the world (and now it is grown into age, and strength, and faction) another lust, the lust of the ear, and a fifth also, the lust of the tongue.

Some people have an insatiable appetite in hearing ; and hear only that they may hear, and talk, and make a party ; they enter into their neighbour's house to kindle their candle, espying there a glaring fire, sit down upon the hearth, and warm themselves all day, and forget their errand ; and in the mean time their own fires are not lighted, nor their families instructed or provided for, nor any need served, but a lazy pleasure, which is useless and impudent.

Hearing or reading sermons is, or ought to be, in order to practice ; for so God intended it, that "faith should come by hearing," and that charity should come by faith, and by both together we may be saved ; for a man's ears, as Plutarch calls them, are *virtutum ansæ*, by them we are to hold and apprehend virtue ; and unless we use them as men do "vessels of dishonour," filling them with things fit to be thrown away, with anything that is not necessary, we are by them more nearly brought to God, than by all the senses besides. For although things placed before the eye, affect the mind more readily than the things we usually hear ; yet the reason of that is, because we hear carelessly, and we hear variety ; the same species dwells upon the eye, and represents the same object in union and single representment ; but the objects of the ear are broken into fragments of periods, and words, and syllables, and must be attended with a careful understanding ; and because everything diverts the sound, and everything calls off the understanding, and the spirit of a man is

truantly and trifling ; therefore it is, that what men hear does so little affect them, and so weakly work towards the purposes of virtue. And yet nothing does so affect the mind of man, as those voices to which we cannot choose but attend ; and thunder, and all loud voices from heaven rend the most stony heart, and make the most obstinate pay to God the homage of trembling and fear ; and the still voice of God usually takes the tribute of love, and choice, and obedience.

Now since hearing is so effective an instrument of conveying impresses and images of things, and exciting purposes, and fixing resolutions, unless we hear weakly and imperfectly ; it will be of the greater concernment, that we be curious to hear in order to such purposes, which are perfective of the soul and of the spirit, and not to dwell in fancy and speculation, in pleasures and trifling arrests, which continue the soul in its infancy and childhood, never letting it go forth into the wisdom and virtues of a man. I have read concerning Dionysius of Sicily, that being delighted extremely with a minstrel that sung well, and struck his harp dexterously, he promised to give him a great reward ; and that raised the fancy of the man and made him play better. But when the music was done, and the man waited for his great hope, the king dismissed him empty, telling him that he should carry away as much of the promised reward as himself did of the music, and that he had paid him sufficiently with the pleasure of the promise for the pleasure of the song ; both their ears had been

equally delighted, and the profit just none at all. So it is in many men's hearing sermons ; they admire the preacher, and he pleases their ears, and neither of them both bear along with them any good ; and the hearer hath as little good by the sermon, as the preacher by the air of the people's breath, when they make a noise, and admire, and understand not. And that also is a second caution I desire all men would take.

That they may never trouble the affairs of preaching and hearing respectively, with admiring the person of any man. To admire a preacher is such a reward of his pains and worth, as if you should crown a conqueror with a garland of roses, or a bride with a laurel, it is an indecency, it is no part of the reward, which could be intended for him. For though it be a good natured folly, yet it hath in it much danger ; for by that means the preacher may lead his hearers captive, and make them servants of a faction, or of a lust ; it makes them so much the less to be the servants of Christ, by how much they " call any man master upon earth ;" it weakens the heart and hands of others ; it places themselves in a rank much below their proper station, changing from hearing " the word of God," to admiration of the " persons and faces of men ;" and it being a *fault*, that falls upon the more easy natures and softer understandings, does more easily abuse a man. And though such a person may have the good fortune to admire a good man and a wise ; yet it is an ill disposition, and makes him liable to every man's abuse.

*Stupidum hominem quâvis oratione percelli*, said Heraclitus; an undiscerning person is apt to be cozened by every oration. And besides this, that preacher whom some do admire, others will most certainly envy; and that also is to be provided against with diligence; and you must not admire too forwardly, for your own sake, lest you fall into the hands of a worse preacher; and for his sake, whom, when you admire, you also love, for others will be apt to envy him.

But that must by all men be avoided, for envy is the worst counsellor in the world, and the worst hearer of a wise discourse. I pity those men, who live upon flattery and wonder, and while they sit at the foot of the doctor's chair, stare in his face, and cry, *ακριβῶς ὃ μεγαλον φιλοσόφου!* rarely spoken, admirably done! They are like callow and unfeathered birds, gaping perpetually to be fed from another's mouth, and they "never come to the knowledge of the truth;" such a knowledge as is effective, and expressed in a prudent and holy life. But those men that envy the preacher, besides that they are great enemies of the Holy Ghost, and are spitefully "evil because God is good to him," they are also enemies to themselves.

He that envies the honours or the riches of another, envies for his own sake, and he would fain be rich with that wealth, which sweats in his neighbour's coffers; but he that envies him that makes good sermons, envies himself, and is angry because himself may receive the benefit, and be improved, or delighted, or instructed by



another. He that is apt fondly to admire any man's person, must cure himself by considering, that the preacher is God's minister and servant ; that he speaks God's word, and does it by the divine assistance ; that he hath nothing of his own but sin and imperfection ; that he does but his duty, and that also hardly enough ; that he is highly answerable for his talent, and stands deeply charged with the cure of souls ; and therefore that he is to be highly esteemed for the word's sake, not for the person. His industry and his charity are to be beloved, his ability is to be accounted upon another stock, and for it the preacher and the hearer are both to give God thanks ; but nothing is due to the man for that, save only that it is the rather to be employed, because by it we may better be instructed.

But if any other reflection be made upon his person, it is next to the sin and danger of Herod and the people, when the fine oration was made, *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, with huge fancy ; the people were pleased, and Herod was admired, and God was angry, and an angel was sent to strike him with death and with dishonour. But the envy against a preacher is to be cured by a contrary discourse, and we must remember, that he is in the place of God, and hath received the gift of God, and the aids of the Holy Ghost ; that by his abilities God is glorified, and we are instructed, and the interests of virtue and holy religion are promoted ; that by this means God, who deserves that all souls should serve him forever, is likely to have

a fairer harvest of glory and service, and therefore that envy is against him ; that if we envy because we are not the instrument of this good to others, we must consider, that we desire the praise to ourselves, not to God. Admiration of a man supposes him to be inferior to the person so admired, but then he is pleased so to be ; but envy supposes him as low, and he is displeased at it ; and the envious man is not only less than the other man's virtue, but also contrary ; the former is a vanity, but this is a vice ; that wants wisdom, but this wants wisdom and charity too ; that supposes an absence of some good, but this is a direct affliction and calamity.

And after all this, if the preacher be not despised, he may proceed cheerfully in doing his duty, and the hearer may have some advantages by every sermon. I remember that Homer says, the wooers of Penelope laughed at Ulysses, because at his return he called for a loaf, and did not, to show his gallantry, call for swords and spears. Ulysses was so wise as to call for that he needed, and had it, and it did him more good, than a whole armory would in his case. So is the plainest part of an easy and honest sermon, it is "the sincere milk of the word," and nourishes a man's soul, though represented in its own natural simplicity ; and there is hardly any orator, but you may find occasion to praise something of him.

When Plato disliked the order and disposition of the oration of Lysias, yet he praised the good words and

the elocution of the man. Euripides was commended for his fulness, Parmenides for his composition, Phocylides for his easiness, Archilochus for his argument, Sophocles for the unequalness of his style; so many men praise their preacher; he speaks pertinently, or he contrives wittily, or he speaks comely, or the man is pious, or charitable, or he hath a good text, or he speaks plainly, or he is not tedious, or if he be, he is at least industrious, or he is the messenger of God; and that will not fail us, and let us love him for that. And we know those that love can easily commend anything, because they like everything; and they say, fair men are like angels, and the black are manly, and the pale look like honey and the stars, and the crooknosed are like the sons of kings, and if they be flat, they are gentle and easy, and if they be deformed, they are humble, and not to be despised, because they have upon them the impresses of divinity, and they are the sons of God.

He that despises his preacher, is a hearer of arts and learning, not of the word of God; and though when the word of God is set off with advantages and entertainments of the better faculties of our humility, it is more useful and of more effect; yet when the word of God is spoken truly, though but read in plain language, it will become the disciple of Jesus to love that man, whom God sends, and the public order and laws have employed, rather than to despise the weakness of him, who delivers a mighty word.

Thus it is fit, that men should be affected and employed, when they hear and read sermons, coming hither not as into a theatre, where men observe the gestures or noises of the people, the brow and the eyes of the most busy censurers, and make parties, and go aside with them that dislike everything, or else admire not the things, but the persons ; but as to a sacrifice, and as to a school where virtue is taught and exercised, and none come but such as put themselves under discipline, and intend to grow wiser, and more virtuous to appease their passion, from violent to become smooth and even, to have their faith established, and their hope confirmed, and their charity enlarged. They that are otherwise affected, do not do their duty ; but if they be so minded as they ought, I, and all men of my employment, shall be secured against the tongues and faces of men, who are *ingeniosi in alieno libro*, witty to abuse and undervalue another man's book.

And yet, besides these spiritual arts already reckoned, I have one security more ; for, unless I deceive myself, I intend the glory of God sincerely, and the service of Jesus, in this publication ; and therefore being, I do not seek myself or my own reputation ; I shall not be troubled if they be lost in the voices of busy people, so that I be accepted of God, and “ found of him in the day of the Lord's visitation.”

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## MISCELLANEOUS SELECTION.

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FROM JEREMY TAYLOR'S SERMONS.

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### PRAYER.

PRAYER is the peace of the spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest ; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts, it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness ; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the outer quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention, which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and

climb above the clouds ; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighings of his wings ; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministeries here below.

So is the prayer of a good man ; when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline ; and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity, his duty met with infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument, and the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest, and overruled the man ; and then his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention ; and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer, and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed, made even as the brow of Jesus, and smooth like the heart of God ; and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy dove, and dwells with God, till it returns like the useful bee, loaden with a blessing and the dew of heaven.

## FEAR.

Fear is the great bridle of intemperance, the modesty of the spirit, and the restraint of gaieties and dissolutions ; it is the girdle to the soul, and the handmaid to repentance, the arrest of sin, and the cure or antidote to the spirit of reprobation ; it preserves our apprehensions of the divine majesty, and hinders our single actions from combining to sinful habits ; it is the mother of consideration, and the nurse of sober counsels, and it puts the soul to fermentation and activity, making it to pass from trembling to caution, from caution to carefulness, from carefulness to watchfulness, from thence to prudence ; and by the gates and progresses of repentance, it leads the soul on to love and to felicity, and to joys in God, that shall never cease again.

Fear is the guard of a man in the days of prosperity, and it stands upon the watch towers, and spies the approaching danger, and gives warning to them that laugh loud, and feast in the chambers of rejoicing, where a man cannot consider, by reason of the noises of wine, and jest, and music ; and if prudence takes it by the hand and leads it on to duty, it is a state of grace, and a universal instrument to infant religion, and the only security of the less perfect persons ; and in all senses is that homage we owe to God, who sends often to demand it, even then when he speaks in thunder, or smites by a plague, or awakens us by threatenings, or discomposes our easiness by sad thoughts, and tender eyes, and fearful hearts, and trembling considerations.

## ZEAL.

However it be very easy to have our thoughts wander, yet it is our indifferency and lukewarmness, that makes it so natural ; and you may observe it, that as long as the light shines bright, and the fires of devotion and desires flame out, so long the mind of man stands close to the altar, and waits upon the sacrifice ; but as the fires die and desires decay, so the mind steals away, and walks abroad to see the little images of beauty and pleasure, which it beholds in the falling stars and little glow worms of the world. The river that runs slow, and creeps by the banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollownesses, and spends itself in small portions, and dies with diversion ; but when it runs with vigorousness and a full stream, and breaks down every obstacle, making it even as its own brow, it stays not to be tempted with little avocations, and to creep into holes, but runs into the sea through full and useful channels.

So is a man's prayer, if it move upon the feet of an abated appetite, it wanders into the society of every trifling accident, and stays at the corners of the fancy, and talks with every object it meets, and cannot arrive at heaven ; but when it is carried upon the wings of passion and strong desires, a swift motion and a hungry appetite, it passes on through all the intermedial region of clouds, and stays not till it dwells at the foot of the throne, where mercy sits, and thence sends holy show-



ers of refreshment. I deny not but some little drops will turn aside, and fall from the full channel by the weakness of the banks, and hollowness of the passage ; but the main course is still continued ; and although the most earnest and devout persons feel and complain of some looseness of spirit, and unfixed attentions, yet their love and their desire secure the main portion, and make the prayer to be strong, fervent, and effectual.

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MARRIAGE.

Marriage is the proper scene of piety and patience, of the duty of parents and charity of relatives ; here kindness is spread abroad, and love is united and made firm as a centre ; marriage is the nursery of heaven ; the virgin sends prayers to God, but she carries but one soul to him ; but the state of marriage fills up the numbers of the elect, and hath in it the labour of love, and the delicacies of friendship, the blessing of society, and the union of hands and hearts ; it hath in it less of beauty, but more of safety than the single life ; it hath more care, but less danger ; it is more merry, and more sad ; is fuller of sorrows, and fuller of joys ; it lies under more burdens, but is supported by all the strength of love and charity, and those burdens are delightful. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities, and churches, and heaven itself.

Celibacy, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined

and dies in singularity ; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things, to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world.

They that enter into the state of marriage, cast a dye of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity.

Life or death, felicity or a lasting sorrow, are in the power of marriage. A woman, indeed, ventures most, for she hath no sanctuary to retire to from an evil husband ; she must dwell upon her sorrow ; and she is more under it, because her tormentor hath a warrant of prerogative, and the woman may complain to God, as subjects do of tyrant princes, but otherwise she hath no appeal in the causes of unkindness. And though the man can run from many hours of his sadness, yet he must return to it again, and when he sits among his neighbours, he remembers the objection that lies in his bosom, and he sighs deeply.

The boys, and the pedlars, and the fruiterers, shall tell of this man, when he is carried to his grave, that he lived and died a poor wretched person. The stags in the Greek epigram, whose knees were clogged with frozen snow upon the mountains, came down to the brooks of the valleys, *χλιῆται νοτεροῖς ἄσθμασιν ὠκί*

*γόνυ*, hoping to thaw their joints with the waters of the stream ; but there the frost overtook them, and bound them fast in ice, till the young herdsmen took them in their stronger snare. It is the unhappy chance of many men, finding many inconveniences upon the mountains of single life, they descend into the valleys of marriage to refresh their troubles, and there they enter into fetters, and are bound to sorrow by the cords of a man's or woman's peevishness.

Every little thing can blast an infant blossom ; and the breath of the south can shake the little rings of the vine, when first they begin to curl like the locks of a new weaned boy ; but when by age and consolidation they stiffen into the hardness of a stem, and have, by the warm embraces of the sun, and the kisses of heaven, brought forth their clusters, they can endure the storms of the north, and the loud noises of a tempest, and yet never be broken ; so are the early unions of an unfixed marriage ; watchful and observant, jealous and busy, inquisitive and careful, and apt to take alarm at every unkind word. For infirmities do not manifest themselves in the first scenes, but in the succession of a long society ; and it is not chance or weakness, when it appears at first, but it is want of love or prudence, or it will be so expounded ; and that which appears ill at first usually affrights the unexperienced man or woman, who makes unequal conjectures, and fancies mighty sorrows, by the proportions of the new and early unkindness. It is a very great passion, or a huge folly,

or a certain want of love, that cannot preserve the colours and beauties of kindness, so long as public honesty requires a man to wear their sorrows for the death of a friend.

There is nothing can please a man without love ; and if a man be weary of the wise discourses of the Apostles, and of the innocency of an even and private fortune, or hates peace, or a fruitful year, he hath reaped thorns and thistles from the choicest flowers of paradise ; for nothing can sweeten felicity itself, but love.

No man can tell, but he that loves his children, how many delicious accents make a man's heart dance in the pretty conversation of those dear pledges ; their childishness, their stammering, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities are so many little emanations of joy and comfort to him, that delights in their persons and society ; but he, that loves not his wife and children, feeds a lioness at home, and broods a nest of sorrows ; and blessing itself cannot make him happy ; so that all the commandments of God, enjoining a man to love his wife, are nothing but so many necessities and capacities of joy.



#### REPENTANCE.

He that repents, confesses his own error, and the righteousness of God's laws, and by judging himself, acknowledges that he deserves punishment ; and there-

fore that God is righteous, if he punishes him ; and, by returning, confesses God to be the fountain of felicity, and the foundation of true, solid, and permanent joys, saying, in the sense and passion of the disciples, “ whither shall we go, for thou hast the words of eternal life ? ” and, by humbling himself, exalts God, by making the proportions of distance more immense and vast. And as repentance does contain in it all the parts of holy life, which can be performed by a returning sinner, (all the acts and habits of virtue being but parts, or instances, or effects of repentances ; ) so all the actions of a holy life do constitute the mass and body of all those instruments, whereby God is pleased to glorify himself.

For if God is glorified in the sun and moon, in the rare fabric of the honey comb, in the discipline of bees, in the economy of ants, in the little houses of birds, in the curiosity of an eye, God being pleased to delight in those little images and reflexes of himself from those pretty mirrors, which like a crevice in a wall, through a narrow perspective transmit the species of a vast excellency ; much rather shall God be pleased to behold himself in the glasses of our obedience, in the emissions of our will and understanding ; these being rational and apt instruments to express him, far better than the natural, as being nearer communications of himself.

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DEPENDANCE OF RELIGION ON GOVERNMENT.

Above all things those sects of Christians, whose professed doctrine brings destruction and diminution to

government, give the most intolerable scandal and dishonour to the institution ; and it had been impossible, that Christianity should have prevailed over the wisdom and power of the Greeks and Romans, if it had not been humble to superiors, patient of injuries, charitable to the needy, a great exacter of obedience to kings, even to heathens, that they might be won and convinced ; and to persecutors that they might be sweetened in their anger, or upbraided for their cruel injustice ; for so doth the humble ivy creep at the foot of the oak, and leans upon its lowest base, and begs shade and protection, and leave to grow under its branches, and to give and take mutual refreshment, and pay a friendly influence for a mighty patronage ; and they grow and dwell together, and are the most remarkable of friends and married pairs of all the leafy nation. Religion of itself is soft, easy, and defenceless, and God hath made it grow up with empires, and lean upon the arms of kings, and it cannot well grow alone ; and if it shall, like the ivy, suck the heart of the oak, upon whose body it grew and was supported, it will be pulled down from its usurped eminence, and fire and shame shall be its portion.



#### SAFETY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

The righteous is safe, but by intermedial difficulties ; he is safe in the midst of his persecutions ; they may disturb his rest, and discompose his fancy, but they are

like the fiery chariot of Elias ; he is encircled with fire, and rare circumstances, and strange usages, but is carried up to heaven in a robe of flames. And so was Noah safe when the flood came, and was the great type, and instance too, of the verification of this proposition ; he was *ὁ δίκαιος* and *δικαιοσύνης κήρυξ* ; he was put into a strange condition, perpetually wandering, shut up in a prison of wood, living upon faith, having never had the experience of being safe in floods.

And so have I often seen young and unskilful persons sitting in a little boat, when every little wave, sporting about the sides of the vessel, and every motion and dancing of the barge, seemed a danger, and made them cling fast upon their fellows ; and yet all the while they were as safe, as if they sate under a tree, while a gentle wind shook the leaves into a refreshment and a cooling shade ; and the unskilful, unexperienced Christian shrieks out whenever his vessel shakes, thinking it always in danger, that the watery pavement is not stable and resident like a rock ; and yet all his danger is in himself, none at all from without ; for he is indeed moving upon the waters, but fastened to a rock ; faith is his foundation, and hope is his anchor, and death is his harbour, and Christ is his pilot, and heaven is his country ; and all the evils of his poverty, or affronts of tribunals, and evil judges, of fears and sudden apprehensions, are but like the loud wind blowing from the right point, they make a noise, and drive faster to the harbour ; and if we do not leave the

ship, and leap into the sea ; quit the interest of religion, and run to the securities of the world ; cut our cables, and dissolve our hopes ; grow impatient, and hug a wave, and dip in its embraces ; we are as safe at sea, safer in the storm, which God sends us, than in a calm when we are befriended with the world.



## GROWTH IN GRACE.

A man cannot, after a state of sin, be instantly a saint ; the work of heaven is not done in a flash of lightning, or a dash of affectionate rain, or a few tears of a relenting pity ; God and his church have appointed holy intervals, and have taken portions of our time for religion, that we may be called off from the world, and remember the end of our creation, and do honour to God, and think of heaven with hearty purposes, and peremptory designs to get thither.

Remember that God sent you into the world for religion ; we are but to pass through our pleasant fields or our hard labours, but to lodge a little while in our fair palaces or our meaner cottages, but to bait in the way at our full tables or with our spare diet ; but then only man does his proper employments, when he prays, and does charity, and mortifies his unruly appetites, and restrains his violent passions, and becomes like to God, and imitates his holy Son, and writes after the copies of Apostles and saints.



It was observed by a Spanish confessor, who was also a famous preacher, that in persons not very religious, the confessions which they made upon their death bed were the coldest, the most imperfect, and with less contrition, than all that he had observed them to make in many years before. For so the canes of Egypt, when they newly arise from their bed of mud and slime of Nilus, start up into an equal and continual length, and are interrupted but with few knots, and are strong and beauteous, with great distances and intervals; but when they are grown to their full length, they lessen into the point of a pyramis, and multiply their knots and joints, interrupting the fineness and smoothness of its body. So are the steps and declensions of him, that does not grow in grace; at first, when he springs up from his impurity by the waters of baptism and repentance, he grows straight and strong, and suffers but few interruptions of piety, and his constant courses of religion are but rarely intermitted, till they ascend up to a full age, or towards the ends of their life; then they are weak, and their devotions often intermitted, and their breaches are frequent, and they seek excuses, and labour for dispensations, and love God and religion less and less, till their old age, instead of a crown of their virtue and perseverance, ends in levity and unprofitable courses. Light and useless are the tufted feathers upon the cane, every wind can play with it and abuse it, but no man can make it useful.

When, therefore, our piety interrupts its greater and more solemn expressions, and upon the return of the greater offices and bigger solemnities, we find them to come upon our spirits like the wave of a tide, which retired only because it was natural so to do, and yet came farther upon the strand at the next rolling; when every new confession, every succeeding communion, every time of separation for more solemn and intense prayer, is better spent and more affectionate, leaving a greater relish upon the spirit, and possessing greater portions of our affections, our reason, and our choice; then we may give God thanks, who hath given us more grace to use that grace, and a blessing to endeavour our duty, and a blessing upon our endeavour.



#### GROWTH IN SIN.

He that means to be temperate, and avoid the crime and dishonour of being a drunkard, must not love to partake of the songs, or to bear a part in the foolish scenes of laughter, which distract wisdom, and fright her from the company.

I have seen the little purls of a spring sweat through the bottom of a bank, and intenerate a stubborn pavement, till it hath made it fit for the impression of a child's foot; and it was despised, like the descending pearls of a misty morning, till it had opened its way and made a stream large enough to carry away the ruins of the undermined strand, and to invade the

neighbouring gardens ; but then the despised drops were grown into an artificial river, and intolerable mischief. So are the first entrances of sin, stopped with the antidotes of a hearty prayer, and checked into sobriety by the eye of a reverend man, or the counsels of a single sermon ; but when such beginnings are neglected, and our religion hath not in it so much philosophy, as to think anything evil as long as we can endure it, they grow up to ulcers, and pestilential evils ; they destroy the soul by their abode, who at their first entry might have been killed with the pressure of a little finger.

As the needle of a compass, when it is directed to its beloved star, at the first addresses waves on either side, and seems indifferent in his courtship of the rising or declining sun, and when it seems first determined to the north, stands awhile trembling, as if it suffered inconvenience in the first fruition of its desires, and stands not still in full enjoyment till after first a great variety of motion, and then an undisturbed posture ; so is the piety, and so is the conversion of a man wrought by degrees, and several steps of imperfection ; and at first our choices are wavering, convinced by the grace of God, and yet not persuaded ; and then persuaded, but not resolved ; and then resolved, but deferring to begin ; and then beginning, but (as all beginnings are) in weakness and uncertainty ; and we fly out often into huge indiscretions, and long to return to Egypt ; and when the storm is quite over, we find little bubblings

and unevennesses upon the face of the waters ; we often weaken our own purposes by the returns of sin ; and we do not call ourselves conquerors, till by the long possession of virtues it is a strange and unusual, and therefore an uneasy and unpleasant thing, to act a crime.



## CONVERSATION.

Man feels his brother's wants by his own experience, and God hath given us speech, and the endearments of society, and pleasantness of conversation, and powers of seasonable discourse, arguments to allay the sorrow, by abating our apprehensions, and taking out the sting, or telling the periods of comfort, or exciting hope, or urging a precept, and reconciling our affections, and reciting promises, or telling stories of the divine mercy, or changing it into duty, or making the burden less by comparing it with a greater, or by proving it to be less than we deserve, and that it is so intended, and may become the instrument of virtue. And certain it is, that as nothing can better do it, so there is nothing greater for which God made our tongues, next to reciting his praises, than to minister comfort to a weary soul.

And what greater measure can we have, than that we should bring joy to our brother, who, with his dreary eyes, looks to heaven, and round about, and cannot find so much rest as to lay his eyelids close together ;

than that thy tongue should be tuned with heavenly accents, and make the weary soul to listen for light and ease, and when he perceives that there is such a thing in the world, and in the order of things, as comfort and joy, to begin to break out from the prison of his sorrows, at the door of sighs and tears, and by little and little, melt into showers and refreshment? This is glory to thy voice, and employment fit for the brightest angel. But so have I seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death, and the colder breath of the north; and then the waters break from their inclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in walls, and dance awhile in the air, to tell that their joy is within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshment, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her redeemer; so is the heart of a sorrowful man, under the discourses of a wise comforter; he breaks from the despairs of the grave, and the fetters and chains of sorrow; he blesses God, and he blesses thee, and he feels his life returning; for to be miserable is death, but nothing is life, but to be comforted; and God is pleased with no music from below, so much as in the thanksgiving songs of relieved widows, of supported orphans, of rejoicing, and comforted, and thankful persons.

It is a fearful thing to see a man despairing. No one knows the sorrow and the intolerable anguish but

themselves, and they that are damned ; and so are all the loads of a wounded spirit, when the staff of a man's broken fortune bows his head to the ground, and sinks like an ozier under the violence of a mighty tempest.



#### NATURE OF WORLDLY POSSESSIONS.

I consider, that he that is the greatest possessor in the world, enjoys its best and most noble parts, and those which are of most excellent perfection, but in common with the inferior persons, and the most despicable of his kingdom. Can the greatest prince enclose the sun, and set one little star in his cabinet for his own use ? Or secure to himself the gentle and benign influences of any one constellation ? Are not his subjects' fields bedewed with the same showers, that water his gardens of pleasure ?

Nay, those things, which he esteems his ornament, and the singularity of his possessions, are they not of more use to others than to himself ? For, suppose his garments splendid and shining, like the robe of a cherub, or the clothing of the fields, all that he that wears them enjoys, is, that they keep him warm and clean, and modest ; and all this is done by clean and less pompous vestments ; and the beauty of them, which distinguishes him from others, is made to please the eyes of the beholders ; and he is like a fair bird, \* \* \* made wholly to be looked on, that is, to be en-

joyed by every one but himself; and the fairest face, and the sparkling eye, cannot perceive or enjoy their own beauties, but by reflection. It is I that am pleased with beholding his gaiety, and the gay man, in his greatest bravery, is only pleased because I am pleased with the sight; so borrowing his little and imaginary complacency from the delight that I have, not from any inherency of his own possession.

The poorest artizan of Rome, walking in Cæsar's gardens, had the same pleasures, which they ministered to their lord; and although it may be, he was put to gather fruits to eat from another place, yet his other senses were delighted equally with Cæsar's; the birds made him as good music, the flowers gave him as sweet smells, he there sucked as good air, and delighted in the beauty and order of the place, for the same reason, and upon the same perception as the prince himself; save only that Cæsar paid for all that pleasure vast sums of money, the blood and treasure of a province, which the poor man had for nothing.

Suppose a man lord of all the world, yet since everything is received, not according to its own greatness and worth, but according to the capacity of the receiver, it signifies very little as to our content, or to the riches of our possession. If any man should give to a lion a fair meadow full of hay, or a thousand quince trees; or should give to the goodly bull, the master and the fairest of the whole herd, a thousand fair stags; if a man should present to a child, a ship laden with

Persian carpets, and the ingredients of the rich scarlet ; all these, being disproportionate either to the appetite, or to the understanding, could add nothing of content, and might declare the freeness of the presenter, but they upbraid the incapacity of the receiver. And so it does, if God should give the whole world to any man. He knows not what to do with it ; he can use no more but according to the capacities of a man ; he can use nothing but meat, and drink, and clothes ; and infinite riches, that can give him changes of raiment every day, and a full table, do but give him a clean trencher, every bit he eats ; it signifies no more but wantonness, and variety to the same, not to any new purposes.

He to whom the world can be given, to any purpose greater than a private estate can minister, must have new capacities created in him ; he needs the understanding of an angel to take the accounts of his estate ; he had need have a stomach like fire or the grave, for else he can eat no more than one of his healthful subjects ; and unless he hath an eye like the sun, and a motion like that of a thought, and a bulk as big as one of the orbs of heaven, the pleasure of his eye can be no greater, than to behold the beauty of a little prospect from a hill, or to look upon the heap of gold, packed up in a little room, or to dote upon a cabinet of jewels, better than which, there is no man that sees at all, but sees every day. For, not to name the beauties and sparkling diamonds of heaven, a man's, or a woman's, or a hawk's eye, is more beauteous and excellent than all the jewels of his crown.



And when we remember, that a beast, who hath quicker senses than a man, yet hath not so great delight in the fruition of any object, because he wants understanding, and the power to make reflex acts upon his perception ; it will follow, that understanding and knowledge is the greatest instrument of pleasure, and he that is most knowing, hath a capacity to become happy, which a less knowing prince, or a rich person hath not ; and in this only, a man's capacity is capable of enlargement. But then, although they only have power to relish any pleasure rightly, who rightly understand the nature, and degrees, and essences, and ends of things ; yet they that do so, understand also the vanity, and the unsatisfyingness of the things of this world, so that the relish, which could not be great, but in a great understanding, appears contemptible, because its vanity appears at the same time ; the understanding sees all, and sees through it.

Suppose a man lord of all this world, a universal monarch, as some princes have lately designed ; all that cannot minister content to him ; not that content which a poor contemplative man, by the strength of Christian philosophy, and the support of a very small fortune, daily does enjoy. All his power and greatness cannot command the sea to overflow his shores, or to stay from retiring to the opposite strand ; it cannot make his children dutiful or wise. And though the world admired at the greatness of Philip the Second's fortune, in the accession of Portugal and the East

Indies to his principalities ; yet this could not allay the infelicity of his family, and the unhandsomeness of his condition, in having a proud, and indiscreet, and a vicious young prince, likely to inherit all his greatness.

And if nothing appears in the face of such a fortune, to tell all the world that it is spotted and imperfect ; yet there is in all conditions of the world such weariness, and tediousness of spirits, that a man is ever more pleased with hopes of going off from the present, than in dwelling upon that condition, which, it may be, others admire and think beautiful, but none knoweth the smart of it, but he that drank off the little pleasure, and felt the ill relish of the appendage. How many kings have groaned under the burthen of their crowns, and have sunk down and died ? How many have quitted their pompous cares, and retired into private lives, there to enjoy the pleasures of philosophy and religion, which their thrones denied ?

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SELECTION

FROM THE WORKS

OF

JOHN LOCKE. 1532-1704.  
M4.



AN ESSAY  
FOR THE UNDERSTANDING.

OF

ST PAUL'S EPISTLES.

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To go about to explain any of St Paul's Epistles, after so great a train of expositors and commentators, might seem an attempt of vanity, censurable for its needlessness, did not the daily and approved examples of pious and learned men justify it. This may be some excuse for me to the public, if ever these following papers should chance to come abroad; but to myself, for whose use this work was undertaken, I need make no apology. Though I had been conversant in these Epistles, as well as in other parts of sacred Scripture, yet I found that I understood them not; I mean, the doctrinal and discursive parts of them; though the practical directions, which are usually dropped in the latter part of each Epistle, appeared to me very plain, intelligible, and instructive.

I did not, when I reflected on it, very much wonder that this part of sacred Scripture had difficulties in it;

many causes of obscurity did really occur to me. The nature of epistolary writings, in general, disposes the writer to pass by the mentioning of many things, as well known to him to whom his letter is addressed, which are necessary to be laid open to a stranger, to make him comprehend what is said ; and it not seldom falls out, that a well penned letter, which is very easy and intelligible to the receiver, is very obscure to a stranger, who hardly knows what to make of it. The matters that St Paul writ about, were certainly things well known to those he writ to, and which they had some peculiar concern in ; which made them easily apprehend his meaning, and see the tendency and force of his discourse. But we having now, at this distance, no information of the occasion of his writing, little or no knowledge of the temper and circumstances of those he writ to were in, but what is to be gathered out of the Epistles themselves, it is not strange that many things in them lie concealed to us, which, no doubt, they who were concerned in the letter, understood at first sight. Add to this, that in many places, it is manifest, he answers letters sent, and questions proposed to him ; which, if we had, would much better clear those passages that relate to them, than all the learned notes of critics and commentators, who in aftertimes fill us with their conjectures ; for very often, as to the matter in hand, they are nothing else.

The language wherein these Epistles are writ, is another, and that no small occasion of their obscurity

to us now. The words are Greek, a language dead many ages since ; a language of a very witty, volatile people, seekers after novelty, and abounding with a variety of notions and sects, to which they applied the terms of their common tongue with great liberty and variety ; and yet this makes but one small part of the difficulty in the language of these Epistles ; there is a peculiarity in it, that much more obscures and perplexes the meaning of these writings, than what can be occasioned by the looseness and variety of the Greek tongue. The terms are Greek, but the idiom or turn of the phrases may be truly said to be Hebrew, or Syriac ; the custom and familiarity of which tongues do sometimes so far influence the expressions in these Epistles, that one may observe the force of the Hebrew conjugations, particularly that of Hiphil, given to Greek verbs, in a way unknown to the Grecians themselves. Nor is this all ; the subject treated of in these Epistles is so wholly new, and the doctrines contained in them so perfectly remote from the notions that mankind were acquainted with, that most of the important terms in it have quite another signification from what they have in other discourses ; so that putting all together, we may truly say, that the New Testament is a book, written in a language peculiar to itself.

To these causes of obscurity, common to St Paul, with most of the other penmen of the several books of the New Testament, we may add those that are peculiarly his, and owing to his style and temper. He was,

as it is visible, a man of quick thought, warm temper, mighty well versed in the writings of the Old Testament, and full of the doctrine of the New. All this put together suggested matter to him in abundance, on those subjects which came in his way ; so that one may consider him, when he was writing, as beset with a crowd of thoughts, all striving for utterance. In this posture of mind it was almost impossible for him to keep that slow pace, and observe minutely that order and method of arranging all he said, from which results an easy and obvious perspicuity. To this plenty and vehemence of his, may be imputed those many large parentheses, which a careful reader may observe in his Epistles. Upon this account also it is, that he often breaks off in the middle of an argument, to let in some new thought suggested by his own words ; which having pursued and explained, as far as conduced to his present purpose, he reassumes again the thread of his discourse, and goes on with it, without taking any notice that he returns again to what he had been before saying ; though sometimes it be so far off, that it may well have slipt out of his mind, and requires a very attentive reader to observe, and so bring the disjointed members together, as to make up the connexion, and see how the scattered parts of the discourse hang together in a coherent, well agreeing sense, that makes it all of a piece.

Besides the disturbance in perusing St Paul's Epistles, from the plenty and vivacity of his thoughts,



which may obscure his method, and often hide his sense from an unwary, or over hasty reader ; the frequent changing of the personage he speaks in, renders the sense very uncertain, and is apt to mislead one that has not some clue to guide him ; sometimes by the pronoun I, he means himself, sometimes any Christian ; sometimes a Jew, and sometimes any man, &c. If speaking of himself, in the first person singular, has so various meanings, his use of the first person plural is with a far greater latitude ; sometimes designing himself alone ; sometimes those with himself whom he makes partners to the Epistle ; sometimes with himself comprehending the other Apostles, or preachers of the Gospel, or Christians ; nay, sometimes he in that way speaks of the converted Jews, other times of the converted Gentiles, and sometimes of others, in a more or less extended sense ; every one of which varies the meaning of the place, and makes it to be differently understood. I have forbore to trouble the reader with examples of them here. If his own observation hath not already furnished him with them, the following paraphrase and notes, I suppose, will satisfy him in the point.

In the current also of his discourse, he sometimes drops in the objections of others, and his answers to them, without any change in the scheme of his language, that might give notice of any other speaking besides himself. This requires great attention to observe ; and yet, if it be neglected or overlooked, will

make the reader very much mistake, and misunderstand his meaning, and render the sense very perplexed.

These are intrinsic difficulties arising from the text itself, whereof there might be a great many other named; as the uncertainty, sometimes, who are the persons he speaks to, or the opinions or practices which he has in his eye; sometimes in alluding to them, sometimes in his exhortations and reproofs. But those abovementioned being the chief, it may suffice to have opened our eyes a little upon them; which, well examined, may contribute towards our discovery of the rest.

To these we may subjoin two external causes, that have made no small increase of the native and original difficulties, that keep us from an easy and assured discovery of St Paul's sense, in many parts of his Epistles; and those are,

First, The dividing of them into chapters and verses, as we have done; whereby they are so chopped and minced, and as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms, but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence, and the light that depends upon it. Our minds are so weak and narrow, that they have need of all the helps and assistances that can be procured, to lay before them undisturbedly the thread and coherence of

any discourse ; by which alone they are truly improved, and led into the genuine sense of the author. When the eye is constantly disturbed with loose sentences, that by their standing and separation appear as so many distinct fragments, the mind will have much ado to take in, and carry on in its memory, a uniform discourse of dependant reasonings ; especially, having from the cradle been used to wrong impressions concerning them, and constantly accustomed to hear them quoted as distinct sentences, without any limitation or explication of their precise meaning from the place they stand in, and the relation they bear to what goes before, or follows. These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these Epistles by parcels, and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions. And, I doubt not, but every one will confess it to be a very unlikely way to come to the understanding of any other letters, to read them piecemeal, a bit today, and another scrap tomorrow, and so on by broken intervals ; especially if the pause and cessation should be made, as the chapters the Apostle's Epistles are divided into, to end sometimes in the middle of a discourse, and sometimes in the middle of a sentence. It cannot therefore but be wondered at, that that should be permitted to be done to Holy Writ, which would visibly disturb the sense, and hinder the understanding of any other book whatsoever. If Tully's epistles were so printed, and so used, I ask whether they would not be much harder to be under-

stood, less easy and less pleasant to be read, by much, than now they are ?

How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the sacred Scripture ; yet, if a Bible was printed as it should be, and as the several parts of it were writ, in continued discourses, where the argument is continued, I doubt not but the several parties would complain of it, as an innovation, and a dangerous change in the publishing those holy books. And, indeed, those who are for maintaining their opinions, and the systems of parties, by sound of words, with a neglect of the true sense of Scripture, would have reason to make and foment the outcry ; they would most of them be immediately disarmed of their great magazine of artillery wherewith they defend themselves, and fall upon others.

If the Holy Scripture were but laid before the eyes of Christians in its due connexion and consistency, it would not then be so easy to snatch out a few words, as if they were separate from the rest, to serve a purpose, to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do. But as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it, may at a cheap rate, be a notable champion for the truth ; that is, for the doctrines of the sect, that chance or interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with verses of sacred Scripture, containing words and expressions that are but flexible, (as all general, obscure, and doubtful ones are,) and his system, that has appropriat-

ted them to the orthodoxy of his church, makes them immediately strong and irrefragable arguments for his opinion. This is the benefit of loose sentences, and Scripture crumbled into verses, which quickly turn into independent aphorisms. But if the quotation in the verse produced, were considered as a part of a continued, coherent discourse, and so its sense were limited by the tenor of the context, most of these forward and warm disputants would be quite stripped of those, which they doubt not now to call spiritual weapons; and they would have often nothing to say that would not show their weakness, and manifestly fly in their faces. I crave leave to set down a saying of the learned and judicious Mr Selden. "In interpreting the Scripture," says he, "many do as if a man should see one have ten pounds, which he reckoned by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, meaning four was but four units, and five, five units, &c. and that he had in all but ten pounds; the other that sees him, takes not the figures together, as he doth, but picks here and there; and thereupon reports, that he had five pounds in one bag, and six pounds in another bag, and nine pounds in another bag, &c. when as, in truth, he has but ten pounds in all. So we pick out a text, here and there, to make it serve our turn; whereas, if we take it altogether, and consider what went before, and what followed after, we should find it meant no such thing."

I have heard sober Christians very much admire, why ordinary, illiterate people, who were professors,

that showed a concern for religion, seemed much more conversant in St Paul's Epistles, than in the plainer, and, as it seemed to them, much more intelligible parts of the New Testament; they confessed, that though they read St Paul's Epistles with their best attention, yet they generally found them too hard to be mastered; and they laboured in vain so far to reach the Apostle's meaning all along in the train of what he said, as to read them with that satisfaction that arises from a feeling, that we understand and fully comprehend the force and reasoning of an author; and therefore they could not imagine what those saw in them, whose eyes they thought not much better than their own. But the case was plain; these sober, inquisitive readers, had a mind to see nothing in St Paul's Epistles but just what he meant; whereas, those others, of a quicker and gayer sight, could see in them what they pleased. Nothing is more acceptable to fancy than pliant terms and expressions, that are not obstinate; in such it can find its account with delight, and with them be illuminated, orthodox, infallible, at pleasure, and in its own way. But where the sense of the author goes visibly in its own train, and the words, receiving a determined sense from their companions and adjacents, will not consent to give countenance and colour to what is agreed to be right, and must be supported at any rate, there men of established orthodoxy do not so well find their satisfaction. And perhaps, if it were well examined, it would be no very extravagant paradox to say, that there are

fewer that bring their opinions to the sacred Scripture, to be tried by that infallible rule, than bring the sacred Scripture to their opinions, to bend it to them, to make it, as they can, a cover and guard of them. And to this purpose, its being divided into verses, and brought as much as may be into loose and general aphorisms, makes it most useful and serviceable. And in this lies the other great cause of obscurity and perplexedness, which has been cast upon St Paul's Epistles from without.

St Paul's Epistles, as they stand translated in our English Bibles, are now, by long and constant use, become a part of the English language, and common phraseology, especially in matters of religion; this every one uses familiarly, and thinks he understands; but it must be observed, that if he has a distinct meaning when he uses those words and phrases, and knows himself what he intends by them, it is always according to the sense of his own system, and the articles or interpretations of the society he is engaged in. So that all this knowledge and understanding, which he has in the use of these passages of sacred Scripture, reaches no farther than this, that he knows, (and that is very well,) what he himself says, but thereby knows nothing at all what St Paul said in them. The Apostle writ not by that man's system, and so his meaning cannot be known by it. This being the ordinary way of understanding the Epistles, and every sect being perfectly orthodox in its own judgment, what a great and invin-

cible darkness must this cast upon St Paul's meaning to all those of that way, in all those places where his thoughts and sense run counter to what any party has espoused for orthodox ; as it must unavoidably to all but one of the different systems, in all those passages that any way relate to the points in controversy between them.

This is a mischief, which, however frequent, and almost natural, reaches so far, that it would justly make all those who depend upon them wholly diffident of commentators ; and let them see how little help was to be expected from them, in relying on them for the true sense of the sacred Scripture, did they not take care to help to cozen themselves, by choosing to use, and pin their faith on, such expositors as explain the sacred Scripture in favour of those opinions, that they beforehand have voted orthodox, and bring to the sacred Scripture, not for trial, but confirmation. Nobody can think that any text of St Paul's Epistles has two contrary meanings ; and yet so it must have to two different men, who taking two commentators of different sects, for their respective guides into the sense of any one of the Epistles, shall build upon their respective expositions. We need go no farther for a proof of it, than the notes of the two celebrated commentators on the New Testament, Dr Hammond and Beza, both men of parts and learning, and both thought by their followers, men mighty in the sacred Scriptures.



So that here we see the hopes of great benefit and light, from expositors and commentators, is in a great part abated ; and those, who have most need of their help, can receive but little from them, and can have very little assurance of reaching the Apostle's sense by what they find in them, whilst matters remain in the same state they are in at present. For those who find they need help, and would borrow light from expositors, either consult only those who have the good luck to be thought sound and orthodox, avoiding those of different sentiments from themselves, in the great and approved points of their systems, as dangerous, and not fit to be meddled with ; or else, with indifferency, look into the notes of all commentators promiscuously. The first of these take pains only to confirm themselves in the opinions and tenets they have already ; which, whether it be the way to get the true meaning of what St Paul delivered, is easy to determine. The others, with much more fairness to themselves, though with reaping little more advantage, (unless they have something else to guide them into the Apostle's meaning than the comments themselves,) seek help on all hands, and refuse not to be taught by any one, who offers to enlighten them in any of the dark passages. But here, though they avoid the mischief which the others fall into, of being confined in their sense, and seeing nothing but that in St Paul's writings, be it right or wrong ; yet they run into as great on the other side, and instead of being confirmed in the meaning, that they thought

they saw in the text, are distracted with an hundred, suggested by those they advised with; and so, instead of that one sense of the Scripture, which they carried with them to their commentators, return from them with none at all.

This, indeed, seems to make the case desperate; for if the comments and expositions of pious and learned men cannot be depended on, whither shall we go for help? To which, I answer, I would not be mistaken, as if I thought the labours of the learned in this case wholly lost, and fruitless. There is great use and benefit to be made of them, when we have once got a rule to know which of their expositions, in the great variety there is of them, explains the words and phrases according to the Apostle's meaning. 'Till then, it is evident, from what is above said, they serve for the most part to no other use, but either to make us find our own sense, and not his, in St Paul's words; or else to find in them no settled sense at all.

Here it will be asked, how shall we come by this rule you mention? Where is that touchstone to be had, that will show us whether the meaning we ourselves put, or take as put by others upon St Paul's words, in his Epistles, be truly his meaning or no? I will not say the way which I propose, and have in the following paraphrase followed, will make us infallible in our interpretations of the Apostle's text; but this I will own, that till I took this way, St Paul's Epistles to me, in the ordinary way of reading and studying them, were very

obscure parts of Scripture, that left me almost every where at a loss; and I was at a great uncertainty in which of the contrary senses, that were to be found in his commentators, he was to be taken. Whether what I have done has made it any clearer and more visible now, I must leave others to judge. This I beg leave to say for myself, that if some very sober, judicious Christians, no strangers to the sacred Scriptures, nay, learned Divines of the Church of England, had not professed, that by the perusal of these following papers, they understood the Epistles much better than they did before, and had not, with repeated instances, pressed me to publish them, I should not have consented they should have gone beyond my own private use, for which they were at first designed, and where they made me not repent my pains.

If any one be so far pleased with my endeavours, as to think it worth while to be informed what was the clue I guided myself by, through all the dark passages of these Epistles, I shall minutely tell him the steps by which I was brought into this way, that he may judge whether I proceeded rationally, upon right grounds or no, if so be anything in so mean an example as mine may be worth his notice.

After I had found, by long experience, that the reading of the text and comments in the ordinary way, proved not so successful as I wished to the end proposed, I began to suspect, that in reading a chapter as was usual, and thereupon sometimes consulting exposi-

tors upon some hard places of it, which at that time most affected me, as relating to points then under consideration in my own mind, or in debate amongst others, was not a right method to get into the true sense of these Epistles. I saw plainly, after I began once to reflect on it, that if any one now should write me a letter, as long as St Paul's to the Romans, concerning such a matter as that is, in a style as foreign, and expressions as dubious as his seem to be ; if I should divide it into fifteen or sixteen chapters, and read of them, one today, and another tomorrow, &c. it was ten to one, I should never come to a full and clear comprehension of it. The way to understand the mind of him that writ it, every one would agree, was to read the whole letter through, from one end to the other, all at once, to see what was the main subject and tendency of it ; or if it had several views and purposes in it, not dependent one of another, nor in a subordination to one chief aim and end, to discover what those different matters were, and where the author concluded one, and began another ; and if there were any necessity of dividing the Epistle into parts, to make the boundaries of them.

In prosecution of this thought, I concluded it necessary, for the understanding of any one of St Paul's Epistles, to read it all through at one sitting, and to observe, as well as I could, the drift and design of his writing it. If the first reading gave me some light, the second gave me more ; and so I persisted on reading

constantly the whole Epistle over at once, till I came to have a good general view of the Apostle's main purpose in writing the Epistle, the chief branches of his discourse wherein he prosecuted it, the arguments he used, and disposition of the whole.

This, I confess, is not to be obtained by one or two hasty readings; it must be repeated again and again, with a close attention to the tenor of the discourse, and a perfect neglect of the divisions into chapters and verses. On the contrary, the safest way is to suppose, that the Epistle has but one business, and one aim, till by a frequent perusal of it, you are forced to see there are distinct, independent matters in it, which will forwardly enough show themselves.

It requires so much more pains, judgment, and application, to find the coherence of obscure and abstruse writings, and makes them so much the more unfit to serve prejudice and pre-occupation when found, that it is not to be wondered that St Paul's Epistles have, with many, passed rather for disjointed, loose, pious discourses, full of warmth and zeal, and overflows of light, rather than for calm, strong, coherent reasonings, that carried a thread of argument and consistency all through them.

But this muttering of lazy, or ill disposed readers, hindered me not from persisting in the course I had began; I continued to read the same Epistle over and over, and over again, till I came to discover, as appeared to me, what was the drift and aim of it, and by

what steps and arguments St Paul prosecuted his purpose. I remembered that St Paul was miraculously called to the ministry of the Gospel, and declared to be a chosen vessel; that he had the whole doctrine of the Gospel from God, by immediate revelation, and was appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, for the propagating of it in the heathen world. This was enough to persuade me, that he was not a man of loose and shattered parts, incapable to argue, and unfit to convince those he had to deal with. God knows how to choose fit instruments for the business he employs them in. A large stock of Jewish learning he had taken in, at the feet of Gamaliel; and for his information in Christian knowledge, and the mysteries and depths of the dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ, God himself had condescended to be his instructor and teacher.

The light of the Gospel he had received from the fountain and Father of light himself, who, I concluded, had not furnished him in this extraordinary manner, if all this plentiful stock of learning and illumination had been in danger to have been lost, or proved useless in a jumbled and confused head; nor have laid up such a store of admirable and useful knowledge in a man, who, for want of method and order, clearness of conception, of pertinency in discourse, could not draw it out into use with the greatest advantages of force and coherence. That he knew how to prosecute his purpose with strength of argument, and close reasoning,

without incoherent sallies, or the intermixing of things foreign to his business, was evident to me from several speeches of his recorded in the Acts; and it was hard to think that a man that could talk with so much consistency, and clearness of conviction, should not be able to write without confusion, inextricable obscurity, and perpetual rambling. The force, order, and perspicuity of those discourses, could not be denied to be very visible; how then came it, that the light was thought much wanting in his Epistles; and of this there appeared to me this plain reason; the particularities of the history, in which these speeches are inserted, show St Paul's end in speaking; which being seen, casts a light on the whole, and shows the pertinency of all that he says. But his Epistles not being so circumstantiated; there being no concurring history that plainly declares the disposition St Paul was in; what the actions, expectations, or demands of those to whom he writ, required him to speak to, we are nowhere told. All this, and a great deal more, necessary to guide us into the true meaning of the Epistles, is to be had only from the Epistles themselves, and to be gathered from thence with stubborn attention, and more than common application.

This being the only safe guide, (under the Spirit of God, that dictated these sacred writings,) that can be relied on, I hope I may be excused, if I venture to say that the utmost ought to be done, to observe and trace out St Paul's reasonings; to follow the thread of his dis-

course in each of his Epistles ; to show how it goes on, still directed with the same view, and pertinently drawing the several incidents towards the same point. To understand him right, his inferences should be strictly observed ; and it should be carefully examined from what they are drawn, and what they tend to. He is certainly a coherent, argumentative, pertinent writer ; and care, I think, should be taken in expounding of him, to show that he is so. But though I say he has weighty aims in his Epistles, which he steadily keeps in his eye, and drives at in all that he says ; yet I do not say, that he puts his discourses into an artificial method, or leads his reader into a distinction of his arguments, or gives them notice of new matter, by rhetorical, or studied transitions. He has no ornaments borrowed from the Greek eloquence ; no notions of their philosophy mixed with his doctrine, to set it off. *The enticing words of man's wisdom*, whereby he means all the studied rules of the Grecian schools, which made them such masters in the art of speaking, he, as he says himself, 1 Cor, ii, 4, wholly neglected ; the reason whereof he gives us in the next verse, and in other places. But the politeness of language, delicacy of style, fineness of expression, laboured periods, artificial transitions, and a very methodical ranging of the parts, with such other embellishments as make a discourse enter the mind smoothly, and strike the fancy at first hearing, have little or no place in his style ; yet coherence of discourse, and direct tendency of all the



parts of it to the argument in hand, are most eminently to be found in him. This I take to be his character, and doubt not but he will be found to be so upon diligent examination. And in this, if it be so, we have a clue, if we will take the pains to find it, that will conduct us with surety through those seemingly dark places, and imagined intricacies, in which Christians have wandered so far one from another, as to find quite contrary senses.

Whether a superficial reading, accompanied with the common opinion of his invincible obscurity, has kept off some from seeking in him the coherence of a discourse, tending with close, strong reasoning to a point; or a seemingly more honourable opinion of one, that had been wrapped up into the third heaven, as if from a man so warmed and illuminated as he had been, nothing could be expected but flashes of light, and raptures of zeal, hindered others to look for a train of reasoning, proceeding on regular and cogent argumentation, from a man raised above the ordinary pitch of humanity to a higher and brighter way of illumination; or else, whether others were loth to beat their heads above the tenor and coherence in St Paul's discourses, which, if found out, possibly might set him at a manifest and irreconcilable difference with their systems; it is certain, that whatever hath been the cause, this way of getting the true sense of St Paul's Epistles seems not to have been much made use of, or at least so thoroughly pursued as I am apt to think it deserves.

For, granting that he was full stored with knowledge of the things he treated of, for he had light from heaven, it was God himself furnished him, and he could not want; allowing also that he had ability to make use of the knowledge that had been given him, for the end for which it was given him, viz. the information, conviction, and conversion of others; and, accordingly, that he knew how to direct his discourse to the point in hand, we cannot widely mistake the parts of his discourse employed about it, when we have anywhere found out the point he drives at; wherever we have got a view of his design, and the aim he proposed to himself in writing, we may be sure that such or such an interpretation does not give us his genuine sense, it being nothing at all to his present purpose. Nay, among various meanings given a text, it fails not to direct us to the best, and very often to assure us of the true; for it is no presumption, when one sees a man arguing for this or that proposition, if he be a sober man, master of reason or common sense, and takes any care of what he says, to pronounce, with confidence in several cases, that he could not talk thus or thus.

I do not yet so magnify this method of studying St Paul's Epistles, as well as other parts of sacred Scripture, as to think it will perfectly clear every hard place, and leave no doubt unresolved. I know expressions now out of use, opinions of those times not heard of in our days, allusions to customs lost to us, and various circumstances and particularities of the parties, which

we cannot come at, &c, must needs continue several passages in the dark now to us at this distance, which shone with full light to those they were directed to. But for all that, the studying of St Paul's Epistles in the way I have proposed, will, I humbly conceive, carry us a great length in the right understanding of them, and make us rejoice in the light we receive from those most useful parts of divine revelation, by furnishing us with visible grounds that we are not mistaken, whilst the consistency of the discourse, and the pertinency of it to the design he is upon, vouches it worthy of our great Apostle. At least, I hope, it may be my excuse, for having endeavoured to make St Paul an interpreter to me of his own Epistles.

To this may be added another help, which St Paul himself affords us, towards the attaining the true meaning contained in his Epistles. He that reads him with the attention I propose, will easily observe, that as he was full of the doctrine of the Gospel; so it lay all clear, and in order, open to his view. When he gave his thoughts utterance upon any point, the matter flowed like a torrent; but, it is plain, it was a matter he was perfectly master of; he fully possessed the entire revelation he had received from God; had thoroughly digested it; all the parts were formed together in his mind into one well contracted, harmonious body; so that he was no way at uncertainty, nor ever in the least at a loss concerning any branch of it. One may see his thoughts were all of a piece in all his Epistles; his no-

tions were at all times uniform, and constantly the same, though his expressions very various ; in them he seems to take great liberty. This, at least, is certain, that no one seems less tied up to a form of words. If then, having, by the method before proposed, got into the sense of the several Epistles, we will but compare what he says, in the places where he treats of the same subject, we can hardly be mistaken in his sense, nor doubt what it was, that he believed and taught concerning those points of the Christian religion.

I know it is not unusual to find a multitude of texts heaped up for the maintaining of an espoused proposition, but in a sense often so remote from their true meaning, that one can hardly avoid thinking that those who so used them, either sought not, or valued not the sense ; and were satisfied with the sound, where they could but get that to favour them. But a verbal concordance leads not always to texts of the same meaning ; trusting too much thereto will furnish us but with slight proofs in many cases ; and any one may observe, how apt that is to jumble together passages of Scripture, not relating to the same matter, and thereby to disturb and unsettle the true meaning of Holy Scripture. I have therefore said, that we should compare together places of Scripture treating upon the same point. Thus, indeed, one part of the sacred text could not fail to give light unto another. And since the providence of God hath so ordered it, that St Paul has writ a great number of Epistles, which, though upon

different occasions, and to several purposes, yet are all confined within the business of his Apostleship, and so contain nothing but points of Christian instruction, amongst which he seldom fails to drop in, and often to enlarge on the great and distinguishing doctrines of our holy religion ; which, if quitting our own infallibility in that analogy of faith which we have made to ourselves, or have implicitly adopted from some other, we would carefully lay together, and diligently compare and study, I am apt to think would give us St Paul's system in a clear and indisputable sense, which every one must acknowledge to be a better standard to interpret his meaning by, in any obscure and doubtful parts of his Epistles, if any such should still remain, than the system, confession, or articles of any church or society of Christians yet known ; which, however, pretended to be founded on Scripture, are visibly the contrivances of men, fallible both in their opinions and interpretations ; and, as is visible in most of them, made with partial views, and adapted to what the occasions of that time, and the present circumstances they were then in, were thought to require for the support or justification of themselves. Their philosophy <sup>and</sup> has its part in misleading men from the true sense of the sacred Scripture.

He that shall attentively read the Christian writers after the age of the Apostles, will easily find how much the philosophy they were tinctured with, influenced them in their understanding of the books of the Old

and New Testament. In the ages wherein Platonism prevailed, the converts to Christianity of that school, on all occasions, interpreted Holy Writ according to the notions they had imbibed from that philosophy. Aristotle's doctrine had the same effect in its turn; and when it degenerated into the Peripateticism of the schools, that too brought its notions and distinctions into divinity, and affixed them to the terms of the Sacred Scripture. And we may still see how, at this day, every one's philosophy regulates every one's interpretation of the word of God. Those, who are possessed with the doctrine of aerial and ætherial vehicles, have thence borrowed an interpretation of the four first verses of 2 Cor. v. without having any ground to think that St Paul had the least notion of any such vehicles.

It is plain, that the teaching of men philosophy was no part of the design of divine revelation; but that the expressions of Scripture are commonly suited, in those matters, to the vulgar apprehensions and conceptions of the place and people where they were delivered. And, as to the doctrine therein directly taught by the Apostles, that tends wholly to the setting up the kingdom of Jesus Christ; in this world, and the salvation of men's souls; and in this, it is plain, their expressions were conformed to the ideas and notions which they had received from revelation, or were consequent from it. We shall, therefore, in vain go about to interpret their words by the notions of our philosophy, and the doctrines of men delivered in our schools. This is to

explain the Apostles' meaning by what they never thought of whilst they were writing ; which is not the way to find their sense in what they delivered, but our own, and to take up from their writings, not what they left there for us, but what we bring along with us in ourselves. He that would understand St Paul right, must understand his terms in the sense he uses them ; and not as they are appropriated, by each man's particular philosophy, to conceptions that never entered the mind of the Apostle. For example ; he that shall bring the philosophy, now taught and received, to the explaining of *spirit*, *soul*, and *body*, mentioned 1 Thess. v, 23, will, I fear, hardly reach St Paul's sense, or represent to himself the notions St Paul then had in his mind. That is what we should aim at in reading him, or any other author ; and till we, from his words, paint his very ideas and thoughts in our minds, we do not understand him.

In the divisions I have made, I have endeavoured, the best I could, to govern myself by the diversity of matter. But, in a writer like St Paul, it is not so easy always to find precisely where one subject ends, and another begins. He is full of the matter he treats, and writes with warmth ; which usually neglects method, and those partitions and pauses, which men educated in the schools of rhetoricians usually observe. Those arts of writing St Paul, as well out of design as temper, wholly laid by ; the subject he had in hand and the grounds upon which it stood firm, and by which he

enforced it, were what alone he minded ; and, without solemnly winding up one argument, and intimating any way that he began another, let his thoughts, which were fully possessed of the matter, run in one continued train, wherein the parts of his discourse were woven one into another. So that it is seldom that the scheme of his discourse makes any gap ; and therefore, without breaking in upon the connexion of his language, it is hardly possible to separate his discourse, and give a distinct view of his several arguments in distinct sections.

I am far from pretending infallibility, in the sense I have any where given in my paraphrase or notes ; that would be to erect myself into an Apostle, a presumption of the highest nature in any one, that cannot confirm what he says by miracles. I have, for my own information, sought the true meaning, as far as my poor abilities would reach ; and I have unbiassedly embraced what, upon a fair inquiry, appeared so to me. This I thought my duty and interest, in a matter of so great concernment to me. If I must believe for myself, it is unavoidable that I must understand for myself ; for if I blindly, and with an implicit faith, take the Pope's interpretation of the Sacred Scripture, without examining whether it be Christ's meaning, it is the Pope I believe in, and not in Christ ; it is his authority I rest upon ; it is what he says I embrace ; for what it is Christ says, I neither know, nor concern myself. It is the same thing when I set up any other man in Christ's place,



and make him the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture to myself. He may possibly understand the Sacred Scripture as right as any man, but I shall do well to examine myself, whether that which I do not know, nay which (in the way I take) I can never know, can justify me in making myself his disciple, instead of Jesus Christ's, who of right is alone, and ought to be, my only Lord and Master ; and it will be no less sacrilege in me to substitute to myself any other in his room, to be a prophet to me, than to be my king, or priest.

The same reasons that put me upon doing what I have in these papers done, will exempt me from all suspicion of imposing my interpretation on others. The reasons that led me into the meaning, which prevailed on my mind, are set down with it ; as far as they carry light and conviction to any other man's understanding, so far I hope my labour may be of some use to him ; beyond the evidence it carries with it, I advise him not to follow mine, nor any man's interpretation. We are all men liable to errors, and infected with them ; but have this sure way to preserve ourselves, every one, from danger by them, if, laying aside sloth, carelessness, prejudice, party, and a reverence of men, we betake ourselves in earnest to the study of the way to salvation, in those holy writings wherein God has revealed it from heaven, and proposed it to the world ; seeking our religion where we are sure it is in truth to be found, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.

ON  
ENTHUSIASM.

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FROM LOCKE'S ESSAY ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

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HE that would seriously set upon the search of truth, ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love of it. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it. There is nobody in the commonwealth of learning, who does not profess himself a lover of truth; and there is not a rational creature that would not take it amiss to be thought otherwise of. And yet for all this, one may truly say, that there are very few lovers of truth for truth's sake, even amongst those who persuade themselves that they are so. How a man may know whether he be so in earnest is worth inquiry; and I think there is one unerring mark of it, viz. the not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance, than the proofs it is built upon will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this measure of assent, it is plain, receives not truth in the love of it; loves not truth for truth's sake, but for some other by end.

For the evidence that any proposition is true, except such as are selfevident, lying only in the proofs a man has of it, whatsoever degrees of assent he affords it beyond the degrees of that evidence, it is plain that all the surplusage of assurance is owing to some other affection, and not to the love of truth; it being as impossible, that the love of truth should carry my assent above the evidence there is to me that it is true, as that the love of truth should make me assent to any proposition for the sake of that evidence, which it has not, that it is true; which is in effect to love it as a truth, because it is possible or probable that it may not be true. In any truth, that gets not possession of our minds by the irresistible light of self evidence, or by the force of demonstration, the arguments that gain it assent, are the vouchers and gage of its probability to us; and we can receive it for no other, than such as they deliver it to our understandings. Whatsoever credit or authority we give to any proposition, more than it receives from the principles and proofs it supports itself upon, is owing to our inclinations that way, and is so far a derogation from the love of truth as such; which, as it can receive no evidence from our passions or interests, so it should receive no tincture from them.

The assuming an authority of dictating to others, and a forwardness to prescribe to their opinions, is a constant concomitant of this bias and corruption of our judgments. For how almost can it be otherwise, but

that he should be ready to impose on another's belief, who has already imposed on his own? Who can reasonably expect arguments and conviction from him, in dealing with others, whose understanding is not accustomed to them in his dealing with himself? Who does violence to his own faculties, tyrannizes over his own mind, and usurps the prerogative that belongs to truth alone, which is to command assent by only its own authority, that is, by and in proportion to that evidence which it carries with it.

Upon this occasion I shall take the liberty to consider a third ground of assent, which with some men has the same authority, and is as confidently relied on, as either faith or reason; I mean *enthusiasm*; which, laying by reason, would set up revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of it, the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct.

Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light, and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason, enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives, that they come from God. So that he that takes away reason, to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both, and does much what the same, as

if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope.

Immediate revelation being a much easier way for men to establish their opinions, and regulate their conduct, than the tedious and not always successful labour of strict reasoning, it is no wonder that some have been very apt to pretend to revelation, and to persuade themselves that they are under the peculiar guidance of heaven in their actions and opinions, especially in those of them, which they cannot account for by the ordinary methods of knowledge, and principles of reason. Hence we see that in all ages, men, in whom melancholy has mixed with devotion, or whose conceit of themselves has raised them into an opinion of a greater familiarity with God, and a nearer admittance to his favour than is afforded to others, have often flattered themselves with a persuasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications from the divine Spirit. God, I own, cannot be denied to be able to enlighten the understanding, by a ray darted into the mind immediately from the fountain of light; this they understand he has promised to do, and who then has so good a title to expect it, as those who are his peculiar people, chosen by him, and depending on him?

Their minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless opinion comes to settle itself strongly upon their fancies, is an illumination from the spirit of God, and

presently of divine authority ; and whatsoever odd action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do, that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from heaven, and must be obeyed ; it is a commission from above, and they cannot err in executing it.

This I take to be properly enthusiasm, which, though founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rising from the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain, works yet, where it once gets footing, more powerfully on the persuasions and actions of men, than either of those two, or both together ; men being most forwardly obedient to the impulses they receive from themselves ; and the whole man is sure to act more vigorously, where the whole man is carried by a natural motion. For strong conceit, like a new principle, carries all easily with it, when got above common sense, and freed from all restraint of reason, and check of reflection, it is heightened into a divine authority, in concurrence with our own temper and inclination.

Though the odd opinions and extravagant actions enthusiasm has run men into, were enough to warn them against this wrong principle, so apt to misguide them both in their belief and conduct ; yet the love of something extraordinary, the ease and glory it is to be inspired, and be above the common and natural ways of knowledge, so flatters many men's laziness, ignorance and vanity, that when once they are got into this way of immediate revelation, of illumination without search, and of certainty without proof, and without

examination ; it is a hard matter to get them out of it. Reason is lost upon them, they are above it ; they see the light infused into their understandings, and cannot be mistaken ; it is clear and visible there, like the light of bright sunshine ; shows itself, and needs no other proof but its own evidence ; they feel the hand of God moving them within, and the impulses of the spirit, and cannot be mistaken in what they feel. Thus they support themselves, and are sure reason hath nothing to do with what they see and feel in themselves ; what they have a sensible experience of admits no doubt, needs no probation. Would he not be ridiculous, who should require to have it proved to him that the light shines, and that he sees it ? It is its own proof, and can have no other. When the spirit brings light into our minds, it dispels darkness. We see it, as we do that of the sun at noon, and need not the twilight of reason to show it us. This light from heaven is strong, clear, and pure, carries its own demonstration with it ; and we may as naturally take a glow worm to assist us to discover the sun, as to examine the celestial ray by our dim candle, reason.

This is the way of talking of these men ; they are sure, because they are sure ; and their persuasions are right, because they are strong in them. For, when what they say is stripped of the metaphor of seeing and feeling, this is all it amounts to ; and yet these similes so impose on them, that they serve them for certainty in themselves, and demonstration to others.

But to examine a little soberly this internal light, and this feeling on which they build so much. These men have, they say, clear light, and they see; they have awakened sense, and they feel; this cannot, they are sure, be disputed them. For when a man says he sees or feels, nobody can deny it him that he does so. But here let me ask,—this seeing, is it the perception of the truth of the proposition, or of this, that it is a revelation from God? This feeling, is it a perception of an inclination or fancy to do something, or of the spirit of God moving that inclination? These are two very different perceptions, and must be carefully distinguished, if we would not impose upon ourselves. I may perceive the truth of a proposition, and yet not perceive that it is an immediate revelation from God. I may perceive the truth of a proposition in Euclid, without its being or my perceiving it to be a revelation; nay, I may perceive I came not by this knowledge in a natural way, and so may conclude it revealed, without perceiving that it is a revelation from God; because there be spirits, which, without being divinely commissioned, may excite those ideas in me, and lay them in such order before my mind, that I may perceive their connexion. So that the knowledge of any proposition coming into my mind, I know not how, is not a perception that it is from God. Much less is a strong persuasion, that it is true, a perception that it is from God, or so much as true. But, however it be called light and seeing, I suppose it is at most but belief and



assurance ; and the proposition taken for a revelation, is not such as they know to be true, but take to be true. For where a proposition is known to be true, revelation is needless ; and it is hard to conceive how there can be a revelation to any one of what he knows already. If therefore it be a proposition which they are persuaded, but do not know to be true, whatever they may call it, it is not seeing, but believing. For these are two ways, whereby truth comes into the mind, wholly distinct, so that one is not the other. What I see I know to be so by the evidence of the thing itself ; what I believe I take to be so upon the testimony of another ; but this testimony I must know to be given, or else what ground have I of believing ? I must see that it is God that reveals this to me, or else I see nothing. The question then here is, how do I know that God is the revealer of this to me ; that this impression is made upon my mind by his Holy Spirit, and that therefore I ought to obey it ? If I know not this, how great soever the assurance is, that I am possessed with, it is groundless ; whatever light I pretend to, it is but enthusiasm. For whether the proposition supposed to be revealed, be in itself evidently true, or visibly probable, or by the natural ways of knowledge uncertain, the proposition that must be well grounded, and manifested to be true, is this, that God is the revealer of it, and that what I take to be a revelation is certainly put into my mind by him, and is not an illusion dropped in by some other spirit, or raised by my own fancy. For if I mistake not, these men re-

ceive it for true, because they presume God revealed it. Does it not then stand them upon, to examine on what grounds they presume it to be a revelation from God? or else all their confidence is mere presumption; and this light, they are so dazzled with, is nothing but an ignis fatuus that leads them constantly round in this circle; it is a revelation, because they firmly believe it, and they believe it, because it is a revelation.

In all that is of divine revelation, there is need of no other proof but that it is an inspiration from God; for he can neither deceive nor be deceived. But how shall it be known that any proposition in our minds is a truth infused by God; a truth that is revealed to us by him, which he declares to us, and therefore we ought to believe? Here it is that enthusiasm fails of the evidence it pretends to. For men thus possessed boast of a light whereby they say they are enlightened, and brought into the knowledge of this or that truth. But if they know it to be a truth, they must know it to be so, either by its own selfevidence to natural reason, or by the rational proofs that make it out to be so. If they see and know it to be a truth, either of these two ways, they in vain suppose it to be a revelation. For they know it to be true the same way, that any other man naturally may know that it is so without the help of revelation.

For thus all the truths, of what kind soever, that men uninspired are enlightened with, came into their minds, and are established there. If they say they

know it to be true, because it is a revelation from God, the reason is good ; but then it will be demanded how they know it to be a revelation from God. If they say, by the light it brings with it, which shines bright in their minds, and they cannot resist ; I beseech them to consider whether this be any more than what we have taken notice of already, viz. that it is a revelation, because they strongly believe it to be true. For all the light they speak of is but a strong, though ungrounded persuasion of their own minds, that it is a truth. For rational grounds from proofs that it is a truth, they must acknowledge to have none ; for then it is not received as a revelation, but upon the ordinary grounds that other truths are received ; and if they believe it to be true, because it is a revelation, and have no other reason for its being a revelation, but because they are fully persuaded without any other reason that it is true ; they believe it to be a revelation, only because they strongly believe it to be a revelation ; which is a very unsafe ground to proceed on, either in our tenets or actions.

And what readier way can there be to run ourselves into the most extravagant errors and miscarriages, than thus to set up fancy for our supreme and sole guide, and to believe any proposition to be true, any action to be right, only because we believe it to be so ? The strength of our persuasions is no evidence at all of their own rectitude ; crooked things may be as stiff and inflexible as straight ; and men may be as positive and

peremptory in error as in truth. How come else the untractable zealots in different and opposite parties? For if the light, which every one thinks he has in his mind, which in this case is nothing but the strength of his own persuasion, be an evidence that it is from God, contrary opinions have the same title to inspirations; and God will be not only the Father of lights, but of opposite and contradictory lights, leading men contrary ways; and contradictory propositions will be divine truths, if an ungrounded strength of assurance be an evidence, that any proposition is a divine revelation.

This cannot be otherwise, whilst firmness of persuasion is made the cause of believing, and confidence of being in the right is made an argument of truth. St Paul himself believed he did well, and that he had a call to it when he persecuted the Christians, whom he confidently thought in the wrong; but yet it was he, and not they, who were mistaken. Good men are men still, liable to mistakes; and are sometimes warmly engaged in errors, which they take for divine truths, shining in their minds with the clearest light.

Light, true light, in the mind is, or can be nothing else but the evidence of the truth of any proposition; and if it be not a selfevident proposition, all the light it has, or can have, is from the clearness and validity of those proofs, upon which it is received. To talk of any other light in the understanding is to put ourselves in the dark, or in the power of the prince of darkness, and by our own consent to give ourselves up to delusion

to believe a lie. For if strength of persuasion be the light, which must guide us ; I ask how shall any one distinguish between the delusions of Satan, and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost ? He can transform himself into an angel of light. And they who are led by this son of the morning, are as fully satisfied of the illumination, that is, are as strongly persuaded, that they are enlightened by the spirit of God, as any one who is so ; they acquiesce and rejoice in it, are acted by it ; and nobody can be more sure, nor more in the right, if their own strong belief may be judge, than they.

He therefore that will not give himself up to all the extravagancies of delusion and error, must bring this guide of his light within to the trial. God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man. He leaves all his faculties in the natural state, to enable him to judge of his inspirations, whether they be of divine original or not. When he illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does not extinguish that which is natural. If he would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth which he would have us assent to, by his authority ; and convinces us that it is from him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything. I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural principles, and if it cannot, that then we

may reject it ; but consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a revelation from God or not. And if reason finds it to be revealed from God, reason then declares for it, as much as for any other truth, and makes it one of her dictates. Every conceit that thoroughly warms our fancies must pass for an inspiration, if there be nothing but the strength of our persuasions, whereby to judge of our persuasions ; if reason must not examine their truth by something extrinsical to the persuasions themselves, inspirations and delusions, truth and falsehood, will have the same measure, and will not be possible to be distinguished.

If this internal light, or any proposition, which under that title we take for inspired, be conformable to the principles of reason, or to the word of God, which is attested revelation, reason warrants it, and we may safely receive it for true, and be guided by it in our belief and actions ; if it receive no testimony nor evidence from either of these rules, we cannot take it for a revelation, or so much as for true, till we have some other mark that it is a revelation, besides our believing that it is so. Thus we see the holy men of old, who had revelations from God, had something else besides that internal light of assurance in their own minds, to testify to them that it was from God. They were not left to their own persuasions alone, that those persuasions were from God ; but had outward signs to convince them of the author of those revelations. And when they were to convince others, they had a power

given them to justify the truth of their commission from heaven, and by visible signs to assert the divine authority of a message they were sent with.

Moses saw the bush burn without being consumed, and heard a voice out of it. This was something besides finding an impulse upon his mind to go to Pharaoh, that he might bring his brethren out of Egypt; and yet he thought not this enough to authorise him to go with that message, till God, by another miracle of his rod turned into a serpent, had assured him of a power to testify his mission, by the same miracle repeated before them, whom he was sent to. Gideon was sent by an angel to deliver Israel from the Midianites, and yet he desired a sign to convince him that this commission was from God. These, and several the like instances to be found among the prophets of old, are enough to show that they thought not an inward seeing or persuasion of their own minds, without any other proof, a sufficient evidence that it was from God; though the Scripture does not everywhere mention their demanding or having such proofs.

In what I have said I am far from denying that God can, or doth sometimes enlighten men's minds in the apprehending of certain truths, or excite them to good actions by the immediate influence and assistance of the holy spirit, without any extraordinary signs accompanying it. But in such cases too we have reason and Scripture, unerring rules to know whether it be from God or not. Where the truth embraced is consonant to

the revelation in the written word of God, or the action conformable to the dictates of right reason or holy writ, we may be assured that we run no risk in entertaining it as such; because, though perhaps it be not an immediate revelation from God, extraordinarily operating on our minds, yet we are sure it is warranted by that revelation, which he has given us of truth. But it is not the strength of our private persuasion within ourselves, that can warrant it to be a light or motion from heaven; nothing can do that but the written word of God without us, or that standard of reason, which is common to us with all men. Where reason or Scripture is express for any opinion or action, we may receive it as of divine authority; but it is not the strength of our own persuasions, which can by itself give it that stamp. The bent of our own minds may favour it as much as we please; that may show it to be a fondling of our own, but will by no means prove it to be an offspring of heaven, and of divine original.

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# ADVANTAGES

OF THE

APPEARANCE OF OUR SAVIOUR

## AMONG MEN.

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FROM THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

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THE great and many advantages we receive, by the coming of Jesus the Messiah, will show, that it was not without need that he was sent into the world.

1. The evidence of our Saviour's mission from heaven is so great, in the multitude of miracles he did before all sorts of people, that what he delivered cannot but be received as the oracles of God, and unquestionable verity. For the miracles he did were so ordered by the divine providence and wisdom, that they never were, nor could be denied by any of the enemies, or opposers of Christianity.

Though the works of nature, in every part of them, sufficiently evidence a Deity; yet the world made so little use of their reason, that they saw him not, where, even by the impressions of himself, he was easy to be found. Sense and lust blinded their minds in some,

and a careless inadvertency in others, and fearful apprehensions in most, (who either believed there were, or could not but suspect there might be, superior unknown beings,) gave them up into the hands of their priests, to fill their heads with false notions of the Deity, and their worship with foolish rites, as they pleased; and what dread or craft once began, devotion soon made sacred, and religion immutable.

In this state of darkness and ignorance of the true God, vice and superstition held the world. Nor could any help be had, or hoped for, from reason; which could not be heard, and was judged to have nothing to do in the case; the priests, everywhere, to secure their empire, having excluded reason from having anything to do in religion. And in the crowd of wrong notions, and invented rites, the world had almost lost the sight of the one only true God. The rational and thinking part of mankind, it is true, when they sought after him, they found the one supreme, invisible God; but if they acknowledged and worshipped him, it was only in their own minds. They kept this truth locked up in their own breasts as a secret, nor ever durst venture it amongst the people; much less amongst the priests, those wary guardians of their own creeds and profitable inventions. Hence we see, that reason, speaking ever so clearly to the wise and virtuous, had never authority enough to prevail on the multitude; and to persuade the societies of men, that there was but one God, that alone was to be owned and worshipped. The belief and worship of

one God was the national religion of the Israelites alone ; and if we will consider it, it was introduced and supported amongst the people by revelation. They were in Goshen, and had light, whilst the rest of the world were in almost Egyptian darkness, “without God in the world.” There was no part of mankind, who had quicker parts, or improved them more ; that had a greater light of reason, or followed it farther in all sorts of speculations, than the Athenians ; and yet we find but one Socrates amongst them, that opposed and laughed at their polytheism, and wrong opinions of the Deity ; and we see how they rewarded him for it.

Whatsoever Plato, and the soberest of the philosophers, thought of the nature and being of the one God, they were fain, in their outward professions and worship, to go with the herd, and keep to the religion established by law ; which what it was, and how it had disposed the minds of these knowing and quick sighted Grecians, St Paul tells us, Acts xvii, 22—29, “Ye men of Athens,” says he, “I perceive, that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing that he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things ; and

hath made of one blood all the nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel him out and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." Here he tells the Athenians, that they, and the rest of the world, given up to superstition, whatever light there was in the works of creation and providence, to lead them to the true God; yet few of them found him. He was everywhere near them; yet they were but like people groping and feeling for something in the dark, and did not see him with a full and clear daylight; "but thought the Godhead like to gold and silver, and stone, graven by art and man's device."

In this state of darkness and error, in reference to the "true God," our Saviour found the world. But the clear revelation he brought with him, dissipated this darkness; made the "one invisible true God" known to the world; and that with such evidence and energy, that polytheism and idolatry have nowhere been able to withstand it; but wherever the preaching of the truth he delivered, and the light of the Gospel hath come, those mists have been dispelled. And, in effect, we see, that since our Saviour's time, the "belief of one God" has prevailed and spread itself over the face of the earth. For even to the light that the Messiah brought into the world with him, we must ascribe the owning and profession of one God, which the Mahometan re-

ligion hath derived and borrowed from it. So that in this sense it is certainly and manifestly true of our Saviour, what St John says of him, 1 John iii, 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." This light the world needed, and this light it received from him; that there is but "one God," and he "eternal, invisible;" not like to any visible objects, nor to be represented by them.

If it be asked, whether the revelation to the patriarchs by Moses did not teach this, and why that was not enough? The answer is obvious; that however clearly the knowledge of one invisible God, Maker of heaven and earth, was revealed to them; yet that revelation was shut up in a little corner of the world; amongst a people, by that very law, which they received with it, excluded from a commerce and communication with the rest of mankind. The Gentile world, in our Saviour's time, and several ages before, could have no attestation of the miracles on which the Hebrews built their faith, but from the Jews themselves, a people not known to the greatest part of mankind; contemned and thought vilely of, by those nations that did know them; and therefore very unfit and unable to propagate the doctrine of one God in the world, and diffuse it through the nations of the earth, by the strength and force of that ancient revelation, upon which they had received it.

But our Saviour, when he came, threw down this wall of partition; and did not confine his miracles or message to the land of Canaan, or the worshippers at Jerusalem. But he himself preached at Samaria, and did miracles in the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and before multitudes of people gathered from all quarters. And after his resurrection, sent his Apostles amongst the nations, accompanied with miracles; which were done in all parts so frequently, and before so many witnesses of all sorts, in broad daylight, that, as I have before observed, the enemies of Christianity have never dared to deny them; no, not Julian himself; who neither wanted skill nor power to inquire into the truth; nor would have failed to have proclaimed and exposed it, if he could have detected any falsehood in the history of the Gospel; or found the least ground to question the matter of fact published by Christ and his Apostles. The number and evidence of the miracles done by our Saviour and his followers, by the power and force of truth, bore down this mighty and accomplished emperor, and all his parts, in his own dominions. He durst not deny so plain a matter of fact, which being granted, the truth of our Saviour's doctrine and mission unavoidably follows; notwithstanding whatsoever artful suggestions his wit could invent, or malice should offer to the contrary.

2. Next to the knowledge of one God, Maker of all things; "a clear knowledge of their duty was wanting to mankind." This part of knowledge, though cul-

tivated with some care by some of the heathen philosophers, yet got little footing among the people. All men, indeed, under pain of displeasing the gods, were to frequent the temples ; every one went to their sacrifices and services ; but the priests made it not their business to teach them virtue. If they were diligent in their observations and ceremonies ; punctual in their feasts and solemnities, and the tricks of religion ; the holy tribe assured them the gods were pleased, and they looked no farther. Few went to the schools of the philosophers to be instructed in their duties, and to know what was good and evil in their actions. The priests sold the better pennyworths, and therefore had all the custom. Lustrations and processions were much easier than a clean conscience, and a steady course of virtue ; and an expiatory sacrifice, that atoned for the want of it, was much more convenient than a strict and holy life. No wonder then, that religion was everywhere distinguished from, and preferred to virtue ; and that it was dangerous heresy and profaneness to think the contrary.

So much virtue as was necessary to hold societies together, and to contribute to the quiet of governments, the civil laws of commonwealths taught, and forced upon men that lived under magistrates. But these laws being for the most part made by such, who had no other aims but their own power, reached no farther than those things that would serve to tie men together in subjection ; or at most were directly to conduce to the pros-

perity and temporal happiness of any people. But natural religion, in its full extent, was nowhere, that I know, taken care of, by the force of natural reason. It should seem, by the little that has hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon its true foundation, with a clear and convincing light. And it is at least a surer and shorter way, to the apprehensions of the vulgar, and mass of mankind, that one manifestly sent from God, and coming with visible authority from him, should, as a king and law maker, tell them their duties; and require their obedience; than leave it to the long and sometimes intricate deductions of reason, to be made out to them.

Such trains of reasoning the greatest part of mankind have neither leisure to weigh; nor, for want of education and use, skill to judge of. We see how unsuccessful in this the attempts of philosophers were before our Saviour's time. How short their several systems came of the perfection of a true and complete morality, is very visible. And if, since that, the christian philosophers have much outdone them; yet we may observe, that the first knowledge of the truths they have added, is owing to revelation; though as soon as they are heard and considered, they are found to be agreeable to reason; and such as can by no means be contradicted. Every one may observe a great many truths, which he receives at first from others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard,



and perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we, who have it delivered already dug and fashioned into our hands, are apt to imagine. And how often at fifty or threescore years old, are thinking men told what they wonder how they could miss thinking of? Which yet their own contemplations did not, and possibly never would have helped them to.

Experience shows, that the knowledge of morality, by mere natural light, how agreeable soever it be to it, makes but a slow progress, and little advance in the world. And the reason of it is not hard to be found in men's necessities, passions, vices, and mistaken interests; which turn their thoughts another way; and the designing leaders, as well as following herd, find it not to their purpose to employ much of their meditations this way. Or whatever else was the cause, it is plain, in fact, that human reason unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of morality. It never from unquestionable principles, by clear deductions, made out an entire body of the "law of nature." And he that shall collect all the moral rules of the philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the New Testament, will find them to come short of the morality delivered by our Saviour, and taught by his Apostles; a college made up, for the most part, of ignorant, but inspired fishermen.

Though yet, if any one should think, that out of the sayings of the wise heathens before our Saviour's time, there might be a collection made of all those rules of morality, which are to be found in the Christian religion; yet this would not at all hinder, but that the world, nevertheless, stood as much in need of our Saviour, and the morality delivered by him. Let it be granted, though not true, that all the moral precepts of the Gospel were known by somebody or other, amongst mankind before. But where, or how, or of what use, is not considered. Suppose they may be picked up here and there; some from Solon and Bias in Greece, others from Tully in Italy; and to complete the work, let Confucius, as far as China, be consulted; and Anacharsis, the Scythian, contribute his share. What will all this do, to give the world a complete morality, that may be to mankind the unquestionable rule of life and manners? I will not here urge the impossibility of collecting from men, so far distant from one another, in time and place, and languages.


I will suppose there was a Stobeus in those times, who had gathered the moral sayings from all the sages of the world. What would this amount to, towards being a steady rule; a certain transcript of a law that we are under? Did the saying of Aristippus, or Confucius, give it an authority? Was Zeno a lawgiver to mankind? If not, what he or any other philosopher delivered, was but a saying of his. Mankind might hearken to it, or reject it, as they pleased; or as it suited

their interest, passions, principles or humours. They were under no obligation ; the opinion of this or that philosopher was of no authority. And if it were, you must take all he said under the same character. All his dictates must go for law, certain and true ; or none of them. And then, if you will take any of the moral sayings of Epicurus, (many whereof Seneca quotes with esteem and approbation,) for precepts of the law of nature, you must take all the rest of his doctrine for such too ; or else his authority ceases ; and so no more is to be received from him, or any of the sages of old, for parts of the law of nature, as carrying with it an obligation to be obeyed, but what they prove to be so. But such a body of ethics, proved to be the law of nature, from principles of reason, and teaching all the duties of life ; I think nobody will say the world had before our Saviour's time.

It is not enough, that there were up and down scattered sayings of wise men, conformable to right reason. The law of nature, is the law of convenience too ; and it is no wonder that those men of parts, and studious of virtue, (who had occasion to think on any particular part of it,) should, by meditation, light on the right even from the observable convenience and beauty of it ; without making out its obligation from the true principles of the law of nature, and foundations of morality. But these incoherent apothegms of philosophers, and wise men, however excellent in themselves, and well intended by them ; could never make a morality, where-

of the world could be convinced ; could never rise to the force of a law, that mankind could with certainty depend upon. Whatsoever should thus be universally useful, as a standard to which men should conform their manners, must have its authority, either from reason or revelation. It is not every writer of morality, or compiler of it from others, that can thereby be erected into a lawgiver to mankind ; and a dictator of rules, which are therefore valid, because they are to be found in his books ; under the authority of this or that philosopher. He, that any one will pretend to set up in this kind, and have his rules pass for authentic directions, must show, that either he builds his doctrine upon principles of reason, selfevident in themselves ; and that he deduces all the parts of it from thence, by clear and evident demonstration ; or must show his commission from heaven, that he comes with authority from God, to deliver his will and commands to the world. In the former way, nobody that I know, before our Saviour's time, ever did, or went about to give us a morality.

It is true, there is a law of nature ; but who is there that ever did, or undertook to give it us all entire, as a law ; no more, nor no less, than what was contained in, and had the obligation of that law ? Who ever made out all the parts of it, put them together, and showed the world their obligation ? Where was there any such code, that mankind might have recourse to, as their unerring rule, before our Saviour's time ? If there was not, it is plain there was need of one to give us such a



morality ; such a law, which might be the sure guide of those who had a desire to go right ; and, if they had a mind, need not mistake their duty, but might be certain when they had performed, when failed in it. Such a law of morality Jesus Christ hath given us in the New Testament ; but by the latter of these ways, by revelation. We have from him a full and sufficient rule for our direction, and conformable to that of reason. But the truth and obligation of its precepts have their force and are put past doubt to us, by the evidence of his mission. He was sent by God ; his miracles show it ; and the authority of God in his precepts cannot be questioned. Here morality has a sure standard, that revelation vouches, and reason cannot gainsay, nor question ; but both together witness to come from God the great lawmaker. And such a one as this, out of the New Testament, I think the world never had, nor can any one say, is anywhere else to be found.

Let me ask any one, who is forward to think that the doctrine of morality was full and clear in the world, at our Saviour's birth ; whither would he have directed Brutus and Cassius, (both men of parts and virtue, the one whereof believed, and the other disbelieved a future being,) to be satisfied in the rules and obligations of all the parts of their duties ; if they should have asked him, where they might find the law they were to live by, and by which they should be charged, or acquitted, as guilty or innocent ? If to the sayings of the wise, and the declarations of philosophers, he sends them into a wild

wood of uncertainty, to an endless maze, from which they should never get out ; if to the religions of the world, yet worse ; and if to their own reason, he refers them to that which had some light and certainty ; but yet had hitherto failed all mankind in a perfect rule ; and, we see, resolved not the doubts that had risen amongst the studious and thinking philosophers ; nor had yet been able to convince the civilized parts of the world, that they had not given, nor could, without a crime, take away the lives of their children, by exposing them.

If any one shall think to excuse human nature, by laying blame on men's negligence, that they did not carry morality to a higher pitch ; and make it out entire in every part, with that clearness of demonstration which some think it capable of ; he helps not the matter. Be the cause what it will, our Saviour found mankind under a corruption of manners and principles, which ages after ages had prevailed, and must be confessed, was not in a way or tendency to be mended. The rules of morality were in different countries and sects different. And natural reason nowhere had cured, nor was like to cure the defects and errors in them. Those just measures of right and wrong, which necessity had anywhere introduced, the civil laws prescribed, or philosophy recommended, stood on their true foundations. They were looked on as bonds of society, and conveniencies of common life, and laudable practices. But where was it that their obligation was thoroughly known

and allowed, and they received as precepts of a law ; of the highest law, the law of nature ? That could not be, without a clear knowledge, and acknowledgment of the law maker, and the great rewards and punishments for those that would, or would not obey him. But the religion of the heathens, as was before observed, little concerned itself in their morals.

The priests, that delivered the oracles of heaven, and pretended to speak from the gods, spoke little of virtue and a good life. And, on the other side, the philosophers, who spoke from reason, made not much mention of the Deity in their ethics. They depended on reason and her oracles, which contain nothing but truth ; but yet some parts of that truth lie too deep for our natural powers easily to reach, and make plain and visible to mankind, without some light from above to direct them. When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts ; and ascribe to our own understandings the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others ; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learn from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth, which, if we had sought, we could not have missed.

Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known ; and because what we see, we see with our own eyes, we are apt to overlook, or forget the help we had from others who showed it us, and first made us see it ; as if we were not all beholden to them,

for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into. For knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favourable enough to our own faculties, to conclude, that they of their own strength would have attained those discoveries, without any foreign assistance ; and that we know those truths, by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom we received them by theirs, only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one, as his private possession, as soon as he, (profiting by others' discoveries,) has got it into his own mind ; and so it is ; but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered ; but their pains were of another sort, who first brought those truths to light, which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs that have carried him so far in such a scantling of time ; and ascribes all to his own vigour ; little considering how much he owes to their pains, who cleared the woods, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable ; without which he might have toiled much with little progress.

A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of, from our cradles, (and are notions grown familiar, and, as it were, natural to us, under the Gospel,) we take for unquestionable, obvious truths, and



easily demonstrable ; without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them, had revelation been silent. And many are beholden to revelation, who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage too, to the truths revelation has discovered. But it is our mistake to think, that because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence ; and in that clear evidence we now possess them. The contrary is manifest, in the defective morality of the Gentiles, before our Saviour's time ; and the want of reformation in the principles and measures of it, as well as practice. Philosophy seemed to have spent its strength, and done its utmost ; or if it should have gone farther, as we see it did not, and from undeniable principles given us ethics in a science like mathematics, in every part demonstrable ; this yet would not have been so effectual to man in this imperfect state, nor proper for the cure.

The greatest part of mankind want leisure or capacity for demonstration ; nor can carry a train of proofs, which in that way they must always depend upon for conviction, and cannot be required to assent to, until they see the demonstration. Wherever they stick, the teachers are always put upon proof, and must clear the doubt by a thread of coherent deductions from the first principle, how long, or how intricate soever that be. And you may as soon hope to have all the day labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy maids, per-

fect mathematicians; as to have them perfect in ethics this way. Hearing plain commands is the sure and only course to bring them to obedience and practice. The greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe. And I ask, whether one coming from heaven in the power of God, in full and clear evidence and demonstration of miracles, giving plain and direct rules of morality and obedience, be not likelier to enlighten the bulk of mankind, and set them right in their duties, and bring them to do them, than by reasoning with them from general notions and principles of human reason? And were all the duties of human life clearly demonstrated, yet I conclude, when well considered, that method of teaching men their duties would be thought proper only for a few, who had much leisure, improved understandings, and were used to abstract reasonings. But the instruction of the people were best still to be left to the precepts and principles of the Gospel.

The healing of the sick, the restoring sight to the blind, by a word, the raising and being raised from the dead, are matters of fact, which they can without difficulty conceive; and that he who does such things, must do them by the assistance of a divine power. These things lie level to the ordinarist apprehension; he that can distinguish between sick and well, lame and sound, dead and alive, is capable of this doctrine. To one, who is once persuaded that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be a King, and a Saviour of those who do believe in him, all his commands become principles; there

needs no other proof for the truth of what he says, but that he said it. And then there needs no more, but to read the inspired books, to be instructed ; all the duties of morality lie there clear, and plain, and easy to be understood. And here I appeal, whether this be not the surest, the safest, and most effectual way of teaching ; especially if we add this farther consideration, that as it suits the lowest capacities of reasonable creatures, so it reaches and satisfies, nay, enlightens the highest. The most elevated understandings cannot but submit to the authority of this doctrine as divine ; which coming from the mouths of a company of illiterate men, hath not only the attestation of miracles, but reason to confirm it ; since they delivered no precepts but such, as though reason of itself had not clearly made out, yet it could not but assent to, when thus discovered, and think itself indebted for the discovery.

The credit and authority our Saviour and his Apostles had over the minds of men, by the miracles they did, tempted them not to mix, as we find in that of all the sects and philosophers, and other religions, any conceits, any wrong rules, anything tending to their own by-interest, or that of a party, in their morality. No taint of prepossession, or fancy ; no footsteps of pride, or vanity ; no touch of ostentation, or ambition, appears to have a hand in it. It is all pure, all sincere ; nothing too much, nothing wanting ; but such a complete rule of life, as the wisest men must acknowledge tends en-

tirely to the good of mankind, and that all would be happy, if all would practise it.

3. The outward forms of worshipping the Deity wanted a reformation. Stately buildings, costly ornaments, peculiar and uncouth habits, and a numerous huddle of pompous, fantastical, cumbersome ceremonies, everywhere attended divine worship. This, as it had the peculiar name, so it was thought the principal part, if not the whole of religion. Nor could this, possibly, be amended, whilst the Jewish ritual stood, and there was so much of it mixed with the worship of the true God. To this also our Saviour, with the knowledge of the infinite, invisible, supreme Spirit, brought a remedy, in a plain, spiritual, and suitable worship. Jesus says to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father, both in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." To be worshipped in spirit and truth, with application of mind, and sincerity of heart, was what God henceforth only required. Magnificent temples, and confinement to certain places, were now no longer necessary for his worship, which by a pure heart might be performed anywhere. The splendour and distinction of habits, and pomp of ceremonies, and all outside performances, might now be spared. God, who was a spirit, and made known to be so, required none of those, but the spirit only; and that in public assemblies, where some actions

must lie open to the view of the world, all that could appear and be seen, should be done decently, and in order, and to edification. Decency, order, and edification, were to regulate all their public acts of worship, and beyond what these required, the outward appearance, which was of little value in the eyes of God, was not to go. Having shut indecency and confusion out of their assemblies, they need not be solicitous about useless ceremonies. Praises and prayer, humbly offered up to the Deity, were the worship he now demanded; and in these every one was to look after his own heart, and to know that it was that alone which God had regard to, and accepted.

4. Another great advantage received by our Saviour, is the great encouragement he brought to a virtuous and pious life; great enough to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that lie in the way to it, and reward the pains and hardships of those, who stuck firm to their duties, and suffered for the testimony of a good conscience. The portion of the righteous has been in all ages taken notice of, to be pretty scanty in this world. Virtue and prosperity do not often accompany one another; and therefore virtue seldom had many followers. And it is no wonder she prevailed not much in a state, where the inconveniences that attended her were visible, and at hand; and the rewards doubtful, and at a distance. Mankind, who are and must be allowed to pursue their happiness, nay, cannot be hindered, could not but think themselves excused from a strict observa-

tion of rules, which appeared so little to consist with their chief end, happiness ; whilst they kept them from the enjoyments of this life, and they had little evidence and security of another.

It is true they might have argued the other way, and concluded, that because the good were most of them ill treated here, there was another place where they should meet with better usage ; but it is plain they did not ; their thoughts of another life were at best obscure, and their expectations uncertain. Of manes, and ghosts, and the shades of departed men, there was some talk ; but little certain, and less minded. They had the names of Styx and Acheron, of Elysian fields and seats of the blessed ; but they had them generally from their poets, mixed with their fables. And so they looked more like the inventions of wit, and ornaments of poetry, than the serious persuasions of the grave and the sober. They came to them bundled up among their tales, and for tales they took them. And that which rendered them more suspected, and less useful to virtue, was, that the philosophers seldom set their rules on men's minds and practices, by consideration of another life. The chief of their arguments were from the excellency of virtue ; and the highest they generally went, was the exalting of human nature, whose perfection lay in virtue. And if the priest at any time talked of the ghosts below, and a life after this, it was only to keep men to their superstitious and idolatrous rites ; whereby the use of this doctrine was lost to the credulous multitude, and its

belief to the quicker sighted, who suspected it presently of priestcraft.

Before our Saviour's time the doctrine of a future state, though it were not wholly hid, yet it was not clearly known in the world. It was an imperfect view of reason, or, perhaps, the decayed remains of an ancient tradition, which seemed rather to float on men's fancies, than sink deep into their hearts. It was something, they knew not what, between being and not being. Something in man they imagined might escape the grave; but a perfect complete life, of an eternal duration, after this, was what entered little into their thoughts and less into their persuasions. And they were so far from being clear herein, that we see no nation of the world publicly professed it, and built upon it; no religion taught it; and it was nowhere made an article of faith, and principle of religion, until Jesus Christ came; of whom it is truly said, that he, at his appearing, "brought life and immortality to light." And that not only in the clear revelation of it, and in instances shown of men raised from the dead; but he has given us an unquestionable assurance and pledge of it, in his own resurrection and ascension into heaven. How has this one truth changed the nature of things in the world, and given the advantage to piety over all that could tempt or deter men from it!

The philosophers, indeed, showed the beauty of virtue; they set her off so, as drew men's eyes and approbation to her; but leaving her unendowed, very few

were willing to espouse her. The generality could not refuse her their esteem and commendation ; but still turned their backs on her, and forsook her, as a match not for their turn. But now there being put into the scales on her side, “ an exceeding and immortal weight of glory ;” interest is come about to her, and virtue now is visibly the most enriching purchase, and by much the best bargain. That she is the perfection and excellency of our nature, that she is herself a reward, and will recommend our names to future ages, is not all that can now be said of her. It is not strange that the learned heathens satisfied not many with such airy commendations. It has another relish and efficacy to persuade men, that if they live well here, they shall be happy hereafter. Open their eyes upon the endless, unspeakable joys of another life, and their hearts will find something solid and powerful to move them. The view of heaven and hell will cast a slight upon the short pleasures and pains of this present state, and give attractions and encouragements to virtue, which reason and interest, and the care of ourselves, cannot but allow and prefer. Upon this foundation, and upon this only, morality stands firm, and may defy all competition. This makes it more than a name ; a substantial good, worth all our aims and endeavours ; and thus the Gospel of Jesus Christ has delivered it to us.

5. To these I must add one advantage more by Jesus Christ, and that is the promise of assistance. If we do what we can, he will give us his spirit to help us to do



what, and how we should. It will be idle for us, who know not how our own spirits move and act us, to ask in what manner the Spirit of God shall work upon us. The wisdom that accompanies that Spirit knows better than we, how we are made, and how to work upon us. If a wise man knows how to prevail on his child, to bring him to what he desires, can we suspect that the spirit and wisdom of God should fail in it, though we perceive or comprehend not the ways of his operation? Christ has promised it, who is faithful and just; and we cannot doubt of the performance. It is not requisite on this occasion, for the enhancing of this benefit, to enlarge on the frailty of our minds, and weakness of our constitutions; how liable to mistakes, how apt to go astray, and how easily to be turned out of the paths of virtue. If any one needs go beyond himself, and the testimony of his own conscience in this point; if he feels not his own errors and passions always tempting, and often prevailing, against the strict rules of his duty; he needs but look abroad into any age of the world, to be convinced. To a man under the difficulties of his nature, beset with temptations, and hedged in with prevailing custom; it is no small encouragement to set himself seriously on the courses of virtue, and practice of true religion, that he is, from a sure hand and an Almighty arm, promised assistance to support and carry him through.

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SPEECH  
OF  
ROBERT CLAYTON,  
BISHOP OF CLOGHER,  
BEFORE THE IRISH HOUSE OF LORDS,  
ON  
SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES AND CREEDS,  
FEBRUARY 2, 1756. f



## ROBERT CLAYTON.

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THIS eminent prelate was born in Dublin, 1695, where his father was a clergyman of the Church of England. After his primary education at Westminster school, he was transferred to Trinity College, Dublin, in which institution he resided many years. He was made fellow of his College, studied theology, and, in 1729, was advanced to the degree of Doctor of Divinity. About this time we find him in London, enjoying the acquaintance of Dr Samuel Clarke, by whom he was introduced to Queen Caroline. So much was the Queen impressed with his talents and learning, and pleased with his manners, that she caused him to be advanced to the Bishopric of Killala. He was afterward made Bishop of Cork, and then of Clogher.

Bishop Clayton was more than forty years old, when he presented himself to the world as an author, and his first work was a learned Introduction to the History of the Jews. This was followed by a treatise on the Chronology of the Hebrew Bible, published in 1747. From this period he wrote much on theological subjects, and took an active part in polemical controversy. In 1751 a small work appeared, entitled an *Essay on*

*Spirit*, of which Clayton was universally considered the author, and which was the foundation of a very animated, and long sustained war of pamphlets. Dr Kippis, in his *Life of Clayton*, speaks as follows with reference to this curious treatise.

“It is a remarkable fact, and hitherto not known in the world, that the *Essay on Spirit* was not actually written by the Bishop of Clogher. The real author of it was a young Clergyman in our prelate’s diocese, who showed the manuscript to his Lordship, and for reasons, which may easily be conceived, expressed his fear of venturing to print it in his own name. The Bishop, with that romantic generosity, which marked his character, readily took the matter upon himself, and determined to sustain all the obloquy that might arise from the publication. He did not, indeed, absolutely avow the work, nor could he do it with truth; but by letting it pass from his hands to the press, and covering it with the *Dedication*, which was his own writing, he managed the affair in such a manner, that the treatise was universally ascribed to him; and it was openly considered as his in all the attacks to which it was exposed. Few persons, except Dr Barnard, the present Dean of Derry, knew the fact to be otherwise; and he hath authorized Mr Thomas Campbell to assure the public, that the Bishop of Clogher was only the adopted father of the *Essay on Spirit*. One effect of our prelate’s conduct in this matter was, his being prevented from rising to a higher seat in the church. In

1752, upon the death of Dr Hart, he was recommended by the Duke of Dorset, then Viceroy of Ireland, to the vacant Archbishopric of Tuam. But a negative was put upon him in England, solely on account of his being regarded as the writer of the Essay.”\*

Clayton's pen was actively employed. He wrote a Vindication of the History of the Old and New Testaments, in which he replied to Bolingbroke and others, and discussed with deep research, and in an able manner, many points of heathen and christian antiquity. He also held a correspondence with William Penn on Baptism. But the most remarkable circumstance in his life, was the delivery of the Speech, selected for the present work. On this subject the words of Dr Kippis may again be quoted.

“ He had been long dissatisfied with the Athanasian Creed, nor did he approve the Nicene Creed in every particular ; on which accounts he was not a little disturbed, that they continued to be a part of the liturgy of the Church. These sentiments he had declared in his writings ; but this, upon mature deliberation, did not appear to him a sufficient discharge of his christian duty. He determined, therefore, to avow the same sentiments in his legislative capacity, and accordingly on Monday, the 2d of February, 1756, he proposed, in the Irish House of Lords, that the Nicene and Athanasian creeds should, for the future, be left out of the

\* Kippis' Edition of the Biographia Brit. Art. Clayton.

liturgy of the church of Ireland. The speech, which this prelate delivered upon this interesting occasion, being taken down in short hand, was afterwards published and hath gone through several editions. When the Bishop returned from the House of Peers, he expressed to a gentleman, who accompanied him in his coach, his entire satisfaction with what he had done. He said, that his mind was eased of a load, which had long lain upon it; and that he now enjoyed a heartfelt pleasure, to which he had been a stranger for above twenty years before."

But whatever satisfaction the Bishop of Clogher might enjoy, in the conviction of having obeyed the dictates of conscience, and discharged a duty, his biographer subjoins, that "he had not the additional felicity of obtaining the approbation of his auditors." In short, he was never afterward regarded with a friendly eye by his brethren of the church; and when, two years from that time, the Third Part of his Vindication came out, in which he renewed his attacks on the Trinity, and spoke with warmth in favour of freedom of opinion and latitude of research, those in authority resolved to issue a process against him. A day was appointed for his examination and trial, but before it arrived he was seized with a fever, and died on the 26th of February, 1758. His death was supposed to have been hastened, if not caused, by the anxiety and agitation into which he was thrown, on account of these hostile and persecuting acts of his enemies



Clayton was distinguished for an amiable temper, catholic spirit, and charitable deeds. The following anecdote illustrates his character, and is equally creditable to all the parties concerned.

“While on a visit to London, a person of respectable appearance called on him to ask charity. Suspecting imposition he at first declined, but when the name of Dr Clarke was incidentally mentioned by the person, Clayton told him, if he would obtain a certificate from Dr Clarke, respecting the necessity of his circumstances, he would afford him aid. A certificate was produced, and without further inquiry, he gave him three hundred pounds, which sum was abundantly sufficient to relieve him from all his embarrassments. Hearing of this noble act of benevolence, Dr Clarke sought the acquaintance of Clayton, and introduced him to the Queen, who was so much delighted with the simplicity of his manners, the gentleness of his disposition, his benevolent and charitable spirit, that she immediately provided for his being appointed to the first vacant Bishopric in Ireland.” He inherited a large patrimony from his father, part of which he generously bestowed in doubling the portion of each of his sisters. Nearly the whole of his revenues from the church is said to have been distributed among the worthy and necessitous, in acts of munificence.

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SPEECH  
OF  
BISHOP CLAYTON,

BEFORE THE IRISH HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON

SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES AND CREEDS.

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MY LORDS,

It has been long wished, that there could be a method found out, for more effectually uniting his Majesty's Protestant subjects, and for making the terms of their conformity to the established church more easy and agreeable to them.

I have, therefore, ventured to prepare a few short heads of a bill for that purpose, as I mentioned to your Lordships at our last meeting; which, though they may not be sufficient to complete the work, may, at least, contribute to prepare and pave the way towards it. But, before I present your Lordships with these heads of a bill, which I have now in my hands, I believe it will be expected, that I should say something to open, and explain the purport and design of them, which consists of two parts.

The first of which is designed to rectify a mistake in the act of uniformity, passed in the 17th and 18th of King Charles the Second. In part of which there is an omission, which seems to defeat and contradict the very intent of the act. But, as I apprehend, that if that part of the act was now read, your lordships would immediately perceive where the error lies; I therefore, humbly move that, that part of the act may now be read. Which was read as follows.

“Be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that every parson, vicar, or other minister whatsoever, who now hath, and enjoyeth, any ecclesiastical benefice or promotion, within this realm of Ireland, shall in the church, chapel, or place of public worship, belonging to his said benefice, or promotion, upon some Lord’s day, before the first day of the annunciation of the blessed virgin Mary, which shall be in the year of our Lord 1667, openly, publicly, and solemnly read the morning and evening prayer appointed by this act to be read, by and according to the said book of common prayer, at the times thereby appointed; and after such reading thereof, shall openly and publicly, before the congregation there assembled, declare his unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things in the said book contained and prescribed, in these words and no other.

“ ‘I, A. B. do hereby declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in, and by the book, entitled, The Book of

Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of Ireland, together with the Psalter, or Psalms of David, appointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches, and the Form and Manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.'

“And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that every person who shall hereafter be presented, or collated, or put into any ecclesiastical benefice, or promotion, within this his Majesty's realm of Ireland, shall in the church, chapel, or place of public worship, belonging to his said benefice or promotion, within two months next after that he shall be in the actual possession of the said ecclesiastical benefice or promotion, upon some Lord's day, openly, publicly, and solemnly read the morning and evening prayers, appointed to be read by and according to the said Book of Common Prayer, at the times thereby appointed; and after such reading thereof, shall openly and publicly, before the congregation there assembled, declare his unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things therein contained and prescribed.”

I now apprehend it appears to your lordships, that the intent of this part of the act was, to oblige every minister possessed of any ecclesiastical benefice, only to give his assent and consent to the *USE of all and every thing* contained in the Book of Common Prayer. Whereas the form of declaration prescribed by the act,

in which, and no other, such minister is obliged to give his assent and consent, is so worded, as seemingly to make him give his assent and consent, not barely to the *use* of all and every thing contained in the Book of Common Prayer, but to the *things* themselves; which is a very different affair, both with regard to the Dissenters and ourselves. With regard to the Dissenters, as it prevents those who do not approve of all and every thing contained in the Book of Common Prayer from joining in communion with us; and with regard to ourselves, as there is a wide distance between being certain of the truth, and being certain of the falsehood of some propositions; it is no way inconsistent with the strictest honesty, for persons to give their assent and consent, for peace and uniformity sake, to the use of some particular forms of worship, either in doctrine or discipline, though they may not thoroughly approve of the things themselves, and to try to get them amended. While the public Declaration of our assent and consent to the things themselves, ties down the mind from any further inquiry, and by discouraging all doubts, and inquisitive industry, puts a stop to all improvement in knowledge, or any further reformation in religion.

Whereas, at the time of the Reformation, which was made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there were so many things to be amended, that it was not consistent with the common rules of prudence to make too great an alteration all at once. The most glaring and notorious offences were, therefore, first to be removed, while com-

mon sense directed, that those which were more latent, and less visible, should be referred to a further day.

But, my Lords, I think I ought to have mentioned to your Lordships, that this part of the Act of Uniformity, which has been now read, together with the little oath (as it has been called) by which non-resistance, and an unlimited passive obedience were established by law, were added in, immediately after the restoration of King Charles the Second, to the Act of Uniformity that was passed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

However, it is not my design, or desire, to cast any reflections upon those persons, who thought it necessary to have these additions then made ; though the private history of that transaction does not speak much to their advantage ; and, indeed, what appears upon the face of the act itself seems to confirm the report. For, though that part of the act in general, seems plainly calculated to oblige the clergy, only to give their assent and consent *to the use of* everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, yet the words, *to the use of*, are omitted out of the declaration of assent, which is prescribed to be read in churches. Which piece of fallacy, when it was first detected in England, was attempted to be rectified there, by a clause brought into the House of Lords for that very purpose. But, the then duke of York, who was afterwards King James the Second, though he could not prevent its passing that House, yet had influence sufficient to have it rejected by the Com-

inons, and did not even let it pass the House of Lords without a protest.

Immediately after the Revolution, another scheme, to the same purpose, together with some further concessions in favour of the Dissenters, was projected by Archbishop Tillotson and others, but which was also defeated by the bigotted zeal of the high church party. I am very sensible that it was then, and is now, urged by some, that there was no need of such a clause, because the intent of the act is sufficiently plain; and that to any one who will but consult and consider the act itself, it must appear, that the declaration of assent and consent should only be understood, as requiring our assent and consent *to the use of* all things contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and that all penal statutes are to be interpreted in their fullest latitude in favour of the offender.

But, my Lords, if you are pleased to consider, that the act itself is not appointed to be read in church, but only the form of declaration, out of which the words *to the use of* are omitted; then it is not to be wondered at, if they who are ignorant of the act, whether laity or clergy, should be deceived thereby; and should not imagine that the form of declaration, which they bear read by virtue of the act, was inconsistent with the intent of the act.

To prevent, therefore, all mistakes of this kind for the future, the alteration, which is proposed to be made on this head, is only to insert the words, *to the use of*, in

the form of the declaration, after the same manner as they now stand in the body of the act. Which, as it is doing no more than what common honesty, and common justice seem to require, I therefore think will not be disagreeable to your lordships.

The second thing proposed in these heads of a bill, is *to lessen the number of our Creeds*. I believe it will be allowed, that the creed, commonly called the Apostles' Creed, contains all the fundamental articles of the christian faith, which are generally necessary to salvation. I believe it will be likewise acknowledged, as a piece of political prudence, that all the articles in every established national creed, in order to prevent unnecessary schisms and divisions in the church, ought to be as few, short, plain, and fundamental as possible. I believe it will also be allowed, by all protestants, that nothing ought to be inserted in our creed as a rule of faith, but what is plainly and clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures; as that is the basis on which the reformation of our religion from popery is founded.

And now, my Lords, if these propositions, which I have here advanced, be true, and in my opinion they are, indisputably, I desire to know, what we protestants have to do with the Nicene Creed?

The Nicene Creed, as far as it differs from the Apostles' Creed, is nothing else but the determination of a number of bishops in the fourth century, on a dispute started in the church of Alexandria, concerning a metaphysical point of theology, not plainly revealed in



the Scriptures ; which the Nicene fathers themselves thought of so little consequence to the generality of Christians, that it was not ordered to be taught the catechumens, nor even so much as to be read in the churches, till it was, some centuries afterwards, appointed by the church of Rome, to be read at the communion service.

In which church, where the Pope, in council, is acknowledged to be infallible, there is some pretence for binding the consciences of men to the belief of articles, that are of human invention. But, in the protestant church of Ireland, which acknowledges no infallibility in any decisions, except those of the Old and New Testament, it seems to be an absurdity to have any doctrine established as a rule of faith, which is not plainly and clearly revealed in those sacred writings.

Whereas, the strongest abettors of the Nicene Creed do not so much as pretend, that the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Father and Son, is to be found in the Scriptures, but only in the writings of some of the primitive fathers. And, I beseech your lordships then to consider, whether it is not absolutely contradictory to the fundamental principles, on which the reformation of the protestant religion from popery is built, to have any doctrine established as a rule of faith, which is founded barely on tradition, and is not plainly, and clearly revealed in the Scriptures ?

I am very unwilling to say anything to the prejudice of the Nicene fathers, or of their cotemporary historians ;

but as the present is undoubtedly a more enlightened age, than that in which the Nicene Council was assembled ; and as it is the inseparable property of time, ever more and more to discover truth, to which the invention of the art of printing, as well as the reformation and revolution, has of late years greatly contributed ; I think I may safely say, it seems unreasonable, that we, at this distance of time, should be tied down to their determinations.

And, as to the ecclesiastical historians of that, and the following century, this much I think myself in honour obliged to inform your Lordships of, that all those books have been since destroyed, which were then published in opposition to the decrees of the Council of Nice, so that all our information comes only from one side of the question. And of those histories upon this head, which have been suffered to come down to our hands, I do not know one, unless you will except Eusebius of Cæsarea, who saith but little on this subject, but what is so filled, either with falsehoods, forgeries, or contradictions, that their veracity is not to be depended on.

But, my Lords, suppose we should allow the Nicene Fathers, and their historians, to be much more honest, and much more able men than they really were ; I cannot think that the determinations of any set of men whatsoever, since the time of the Apostles, on a metaphysical subject of theology, not clearly revealed in the Scriptures, is the proper subject for the creed of a Christian.

The great Lord Bacon, in his excellent treatise on the *Advancement of Learning*, a work that cannot sufficiently be praised, and to which Mr Boyle, Mr Locke, and the great Sir Isaac Newton, owe the first rudiments of the several systems, which they have since carried to so great perfection; in this wonderful treatise, wherein Lord Bacon is showing the deficiency of each species of learning, and is pointing out the errors which have prevented the progress and advancement of it; the science of theology comes, among others, under his consideration, upon which he has this remark, which for fear of being mistaken in the quotation, I have written down, and shall beg leave to read to your Lordships. "Here, therefore, I note this deficiency, that there hath not been, to my understanding, sufficiently inquired and handled, the true limits and use of reason in spiritual things, as a kind of divine dialectic; which for that it is not done, it seemeth to me a thing usual, by pretext of true conceiving that which is revealed, to search and mine into that, which is not revealed."

You have now heard, my Lords, the sentiment of this great man, which is, that the searching and mining into things not revealed, under pretence of their being contained in that which is revealed, is the error, which he notes in the *advancement of theology*. Accordingly, if we inquire into the event and consequence of the aforementioned determination in the council of Nice, we shall find, that the course of religion was thereby diverted into a wrong channel, and that Christianity from thence

forward, instead of being considered as a practical obligation, was changed into a speculative science; men's minds were irritated against one another, on account of niceties, that were of no consequence to religion; and the doctrine of faith, or of belief in punctilios of this kind, was so magnified and extolled, as being necessary to salvation, that the righteousness of works was entirely neglected. Polemical divinity was introduced into religion, whereby the church was rendered, if I may be allowed the expression, literally militant; and the divine precept of universal love, which our Saviour recommended to his disciples, as his command, was changed into that of hatred to all who would not subscribe.

Whereas, had the Nicene fathers determined nothing but in scriptural terms; and had declared, that a difference of opinion, concerning things not plainly and clearly revealed, was not a sufficient foundation for a breach of communion, it is more than probable, that most of those disturbances, which have since infested the christian church, might have been prevented.

As to the Athanasian Creed, as that is a superstructure built upon the foundation of the Nicene Creed, it is not only liable to all the objections, which can be made against that, but has also many blemishes of its own to answer for; since it has not so much as the authority of a council to support it, but is now a known forgery, detected by the criticisms of the learned Vossius, and cannot be traced within two hundred years of the time of Athanasius. But, then it may probably be asked,

how comes it to bear the name of Athanasius? The answer to which is, because it agrees perfectly with the Athanasian doctrine, and had the name of Athanasius affixed to it by the church of Rome, because he was a person much esteemed by that church; and whose principles, as well political as religious, the members of that church have long laboured to propagate among mankind. But, as the true character of this Athanasius is not commonly known; and, therefore, some of your lordships may possibly be unacquainted with it, I shall beg leave to inform you who, and what he was.

Athanasius was a young, forward, petulant deacon in the church of Alexandria, of an ambitious spirit, with a talent fitted for disputation. And as he could have no hopes of getting into that bishopric, unless he could drive Arius out of Alexandria, who was the principal presbyter in that church next to the bishop; this he effected, by fomenting this dispute about the trinity, between Arius and the bishop; on which account, having got Arius excommunicated, he had him then banished out of Alexandria. Which, when done, no sooner was the old bishop Alexander dead, but Athanasius, though then only a young man, of about twenty seven or twenty eight years of age, by the assistance of a set of murdering ascetics, forced himself at once into that high archbishopric, without ever passing through any of the intermediate degrees. And, having gotten himself illegally consecrated, contrary to all the rules and canons of the church, he prevailed on the Emperor Con-

stantine to confirm him therein, by the power of bribes, that were given to one of the Emperor's favorites. And no sooner was he thoroughly established in it, but he immediately flew in the Emperor's face; and when the Emperor Constantine the Great was dead, treated his son and successor Constantius, with more contempt and insolence, than could have been borne from an equal. And when he was dispossessed of his bishopric for other irregularities, by a numerous council of bishops, regularly summoned and assembled, he forced his way into that see again, more than once or twice, over the murdered corpses of his antagonists; and waded into his cathedral, through seas of blood.

But it may, perhaps, be further asked, why should this recommend him to the see of Rome? The reason of which is, because this was all done by the connivance, and with the concurrence of that see; Athanasius, while he treated all the rest of mankind, and even his own royal master, with the utmost insolence, having paid a servile court to the papal chair. Insomuch, that in the books of the canon law, the first precedent that is, or can be produced, in support of the Papal supremacy, is this instance of the servile submission that was paid by Athanasius to Pope Julius. And, therefore, I should apprehend, that all protestants, who have renounced the supremacy of the Pope, and the independency of the church upon the state, ought to be for obliterating the name of Athanasius out of their liturgy, into which it was probably inserted, only with a view of

recommending his political principles, under the shelter and influence of his religious doctrines.

But, my Lords, suppose we should allow this creed to be no forgery, and that it hath the sanction of a council to support it, there are still more objections against it, than are to be urged against the Nicene Creed. For, as it searches and mines further into that which is not revealed, than even the Nicene Creed does, it is so much the more faulty as a creed, which ought to contain nothing that is not plainly and clearly revealed in the scriptures.

My Lords, I desire you will be so good as to observe, that I do not take upon me to say, that the doctrine contained in the Athanasian Creed is false; I only say, it is not plainly and clearly revealed. Nor, do I presume to condemn those, who think they have evidence sufficient to justify their being peremptory, and positive, in the support of it. I judge no man; and only say, it contains a doctrine of so nice, so disputable, and metaphysical a nature, as is hardly fit to be treated on in the schools; but is, I am certain, by no means sufficiently revealed to be made the subject of a creed, which is commanded by public authority to be read by the minister, and repeated by the people, in the public service of the church; where the low, as well as the high, are ordered to assemble themselves, and which should be, according to St Paul, not to doubtful disputations, but that they may with one mind, and one

mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And suppose, my Lords, we should further allow, that the doctrine contained in the Athanasian Creed may be true; can any one, nevertheless, justify those damnable clauses, which, in a point of so disputable a nature, and of so difficult a determination, so positively assert, that every one that does not "keep this faith whole and undefiled, shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly?" And again, that "he that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity." And concludes with declaring, that "this is the Catholic faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." Hard words! and seemingly unfit for the mouth of a Christian, and a protestant.

But, my Lords, let us now, on the contrary, only for argument's sake, suppose, that the doctrine contained in the Athanasian Creed is wrong; and, unless the author of it was infallible, there is a possibility that it may be so; and then let us consider what would be the consequence—I dread to name it; as it would be no less than blasphemy—for, if the Father, and the Son, have not from all eternity been consubstantial, and coequal, the assertion of that proposition would be blasphemy.

My Lords, I will own freely to your lordships, that it is the dread and terror of a wrong determination, in a point of so delicate a nature, that makes me solicitous for having this creed removed out of our liturgy. And in a matter of such great consequence,



and where the honour of God the Father is so nearly concerned, I own, that I am fearful how I put any other being, or person, upon a level with him.

The most zealous advocates for the Athanasian doctrine have, when hard pressed, been forced to allow, that there is a priority of order and dignity between the Father and the Son. Because the Father is unbegotten, though the Son is not; and the Son is said to be commanded and sent, though the Father is not. Now, if this priority of order and dignity does not consist in words only, but is founded in nature, and it be allowed, that there is such a real difference between the Father and the Son, as to be a foundation in the nature and reason of things, for this priority of order and dignity, I wonder how the same persons, who allow that, can possibly assert, that, "in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater or less than another."

The distinction is at best so exceeding nice between a priority of order, and a subordination; or rather, between a priority of order and dignity, founded on the nature and reason of things, and a priority in existence and power, that I own it is too subtile for my comprehension. And then, I beseech your lordships to consider, whether this is a fit subject for the public service of the church.

My Lords, I fear I have already trespassed on your patience too long; but, before I sit down, I think it my duty to mention one objection to your lordships, and, indeed, the only one of any force, that I have ever yet

heard, to these alterations, which is proposed to be made in favour of the Dissenters; and that is, the fear and danger of innovations, which, when once begun, nobody knows where they will end.

In answer to which, I shall beg leave to observe, that if your lordships are pleased to pass these heads of a bill, let them go where they will, or let them receive what alterations they may, your lordships, upon their return, will be still masters of them, and if you do not approve of them, you may them quash them, if you please.

But I own, my Lords, that I am under no apprehension of their receiving any disagreeable alterations, as I do not think the church is in any manner of danger under the present administration. And I am persuaded, that if my Lords the Bishops will but shew themselves inclined to amend, what they cannot but acknowledge is amiss, they will find the laity ready to assist and support them, rather than otherwise.

We see alterations and innovations frequently made in the temporal constitution of the state, and no ill consequences following from thence; and as we have the promises of God, that he will take such care of his church, as that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, if we do not put our confidence in him, or his word, surely there is less reason to be under apprehension for the church than for the state.

I cannot, therefore, but join with the great Lord Bacon in an observation, which he makes in his treatise

on *Church Controversies*, where, addressing himself to the Bishops, he has these words, which I shall beg leave to read to your lordships. "Again, to my Lords the Bishops I say, that it is hard for them to avoid blame (in the opinion of an indifferent person) in standing so precisely upon altering nothing. Laws not refreshed with new laws wax sour. Without a change of ill, a man cannot continue the good. To take away many abuses supplanteth not good orders, but establisheth them. A contentious retaining of custom, is a turbulent thing, as well as innovation. A good husbandman is ever pruning in his vineyard or field; not unseasonably, indeed, nor unskilfully, but lightly; he findeth something ever to do. We have heard of no offers of the bishops, of bills in parliament; which, no doubt, proceeding from them, to whom it properly belongeth, would have ever received acceptation."

And, therefore, my Lords, that this objection may no longer lie against the whole bench of bishops, I take the liberty of presenting these heads of a bill. And, humbly move, that they may be now received.

"Heads of a bill for more effectually uniting His Majesty's Protestant subjects, and for explaining an act, entitled, an act for the uniformity of public prayers, &c.

"Whereas, it appears from the words of the aforesaid act, for the uniformity of public prayers, &c. that the design of the declaration of assent and consent, required

to be read by every parson, vicar, or other minister, who hath, or shall enjoy an ecclesiastical benefice or promotion in this His Majesty's kingdom of Ireland, is, that they should give their unfeigned assent and consent to the use all things, contained in the book of Common Prayer.

“ And, whereas, the removing all unnecessary doubts and difficulties, in matters of conscience, may contribute not only to unite His Majesty's protestant subjects among themselves, but also, to encourage foreign protestants to come, and settle among us.

“ We pray it may be enacted, that every parson, who shall, after the first day of \_\_\_\_\_ which shall be in the year of \_\_\_\_\_ be presented, or collated, or put into any ecclesiastical benefice or promotion, within this His Majesty's kingdom of Ireland, shall in the church, chapel, or place of public worship, belonging to the said benefice or promotion, within two months next after that he shall be in the actual possession of the said ecclesiastical benefice, or promotion, upon some Lord's day, openly, publicly and solemnly, read the morning and evening prayers appointed to be read, by and according to the said book of Common Prayer, at the times in the aforementioned act appointed; and after the reading thereof, shall openly and publicly, before the congregation there assembled, declare his unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things therein contained and prescribed, in these words following, and no other; anything in the aforementioned act to the contrary notwithstanding.

“ ‘I, A. B. do hereby give my unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all, and everything contained and prescribed, in and by the book entitled, the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Ireland; together with the Psalter, or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be said, or sung in churches; and the form or manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests and deacons.’

“ And, whereas, a great variety of creeds do but contribute to confound the minds of weak persons, and to disunite protestants among themselves; we pray it may be enacted, that in such places in the aforementioned Book of Common Prayer, where the rubric directs the creed, commonly called the Nicene Creed, or the creed commonly called the Athanasian Creed, to be read; the officiating minister, shall read the creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed, instead thereof, and not the Nicene Creed, or the creed, commonly called the Athanasian Creed.”

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SELECTION  
FROM THE WRITINGS  
OF  
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My





ESSAY  
ON THE  
CAUSES OF UNCHARITABLENESS.

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FROM DR WATTS' ORTHODOXY AND CHARITY UNITED.

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AN uncharitable humour springs generally from some of these following causes.

I. *First, From a malicious constitution of nature, an acrimonious or a choleric temper of blood.* There are some animal engines of human flesh, that have their juices all soured in their very formation; and there is an ill ferment raised in such persons at the perception of every object, that is not just suited to their present fancy and inclination. And by the hard laws of union between soul and body in this our fallen state, the spirit too often complies with the fretful distempers of the flesh. There are but few that attempt to suppress the ferment, and to resist the angry motions of the animal; and of those few that attempt it, scarce one in ten is very successful. For it is a work of toil, and difficulty, perpetual watchfulness and unceasing prayer.

This ill humour mixes itself with religion, as well as with civil affairs. It diffuses its malignity through all the studies and the manners of the man, and gives a visible tincture to his notions and his practices. Furio can never converse about the calmest and most speculative points of divinity, but his indignation kindles against every different opinion, his fiery temper breaks out and blazes, and he bestows on his own deportment the honourable names of shining light and burning zeal. His peevish and angry passions are so blended with his understanding, that hard names are his best arguments; most convincing to himself, though they are the just scorn of the wise. He stabs his brethren that differ from him to the heart, with pointed railing; and from an aversion to an opinion rises to an immortal hatred of the person. If our great Creator has united any of our souls to bodies, that are less infected with this vicious juice, we have reason to adore his sovereign goodness.

II. *Selſlove, and pride, and a vain conceit of our own opinions*, is another spring of uncharitable carriages. Did you ever see a weak and humble soul sensible of its own poverty and ignorance, and ready to esteem others above himself, easily indulge this uncharitable humour? Alas! poor foolish mankind is very prone to esteem itself wise and knowing. Little Laudillus, who is almost always in the wrong, has much ado to persuade himself, that he was ever capable of mistaking. He secretly thinks all his opinions to be divine truths, and therefore he is very lavish in pronouncing error and heresy

upon every notion and practice, that differs from his own. He takes the freedom to choose a religion for himself, but he allows no man besides the same liberty. He is sure that he has reason to dissent from others, but no man has reason to dissent from him. He sets up for infallibility without a triple crown, and fixes a see of ecclesiastical sovereignty on this side the water. He awes some slavish spirits into submission, and they become treacherous to their own souls, and to the rights of human nature, by delivering up their faith and consciences to his imperious dictates. Then the man grows haughty, surly, and severe, especially if he be advanced to any degree of honour and authority in the church. Then, in his inflexible justice, he delivers up the humble and inquisitive christian unto Satan, because he cannot *assent and consent to all and everything contained* in his scheme; and he teaches perhaps his elder brethren the doctrines and discipline of the Gospel, as Gideon did the elders of Succoth, with the briars and thorns of the wilderness.

III. This hateful vice may be derived from a third original; and that is a *constant and friendly acquaintance with the men and books of our own opinion, and an avoidance of all the writers and persons that differ from us*. This has a mighty influence to beget and maintain uncharitable notions; yet this is the constant practice, not only of the unlearned, but of too many of the learned world. Hermes sits all the year in his own cell, and never looks abroad beyond the clan of his own,

fraternity. Hermes reads the controversies as they are described only by one party, and disputes them over only in the books that are written on one side. He finds a great appearance of argument and Scripture there, and then proclaims it impossible, that the adverse party should shew equal reason or revelation; and thus he proceeds to censure them as *men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, and twisting the Scriptures to their own damnation*. Cicero in his treatise, *De natura Deorum*, marks this humour, and brands it, *Vestra solum legitis, vestra amatis, ceteros causa incognita condemnatis*.\*

But let you and I, my friend, who delight in charity, let us converse a little with authors that differ from our present opinions, and we shall see their sentiments drest up so plausibly, and set in so fair a light, that might easily persuade men of sincere consciences to embrace them; and this will prevent us from censorious thoughts concerning our candid adversaries, and their disciples. There is scarce anything that enlarges the mind more, and more disengages it from narrow and selfish principles, than a free converse with the virtuous and ingenious of all parties.

There is a memorable story to this purpose, concerning two neighbours in an unsociable town, who were always quarrelling about the private meeting and the

\* You read only your own books, you love only your own, and you condemn others before you know any sufficient reason, for want of knowing their opinions.

parish church. Both places of worship in that town were well supplied with preachers of good sense and serious religion; but each of them was the subject of unmerciful reproach between these two neighbours, whensoever they met, and their different methods of worship were mutually reviled; the one as formal and spiritless, the other as enthusiastical and indecent. At last Pacifico, their common friend, persuaded them to hear each other's minister, and accompanied them both one day to their different assemblies; and they were both surprised to hear the Gospel preached with a due degree of decency and fervour, both at meeting and at church. And though they continued still to adhere to their own party, as judging it, in some respects, suited best to their edification; yet they maintained hearty friendship with each other, and delightful society in religious conference. Thus the quarrelsome mistake was rectified by better acquaintance. They lived many years together in peace; they composed the animosities of different parties, that dwelt in the town; they died in perfect charity, and left a sweet influence behind them, and an honourable example.

IV. A fourth spring of uncharitableness is, *our reading the word of God with a whole set of notions established beforehand*. And yet how common a method, and how constant is this? Diæcion has long ago determined, that bishops must be superior to presbyters; he has received ordination from Episcopal hands; and hopes one day himself to be capable of ordaining others.

Thus while he is growing up towards the mitre, he reads the Scriptures only to confirm his own determined opinions. He stretches and torments many an unwilling text, to make it speak the language of his own thoughts. He neglects the passages that favour other forms of government and methods of ministration; or else he constrains them to mean Episcopacy too. Every word that he reads, hath a Diocesan aspect; and the first verse of Genesis can prove prelacy, for aught I know, as it has been able heretofore to demonstrate papacy, when *in principio creavit Deus cælum et terram*, decided the controversy, and set the pope above the emperor. For God made all things from one beginning and not from two.

Synodias reads the Bible with a Presbyterian glass, and Fratrio with a Congregational optic. They can find nothing theré but their own opinions, and both of them wonder that Diæcion should not see them too. Fratrio turns over the Scriptures with great diligence and meditation, and as often as he finds the word *church* there, he thinks of nothing but a congregation of faithful men; as the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch are so many single congregations. When Synodias meets the same word in his Bible, he is often in the midst of an assembly of divines; and especially when any power is attributed to the church, he is sure it must intend a classis of presbyters, or consistory of elders. When the same word falls under the eye of Diæcion, in his course of reading the New Testament,

he cannot imagine anything is meant short of a diocess. All his churches are or should be as big as counties or shires. And I might add, that when poor Parochianus the mason, finds leisure to read a chapter, and lights upon the mention of a church in it, he thinks immediately of a tall stone building with a steeple upon it, a bell or two, and a weathercock.

I might give the like instances of many other terms and expressions in Scripture, to which men have unalterably fixed their several different ideas, and raised consequences from them, and interpret the word of God by them, without inquiring whether their ideas are conformable to the sense in which the Scripture uses those expressions. And then it is no wonder, that their schemes of ecclesiastical government are so different. And yet each of these prepossessed opiniators think their own exposition of the text so evident, that they chide the perverseness of all other men, as though they were resolved to wink against the light. It is like a person of a fretful constitution, whose eyes are also tinged with the jaundice, he quarrels with every man that he meets, because he will not consent to call all things yellow. Thus by the false light of affection in which they behold some beloved texts, and their negligence of all others, or at least by the colours of prejudice that they throw upon them, each triumphs in his own sentiments, and pronounces the Apostles and Prophets of his side. Then he lets fly many a sharp invective against all the men that presume to oppose him ;

for in his sense they oppose the Apostles themselves and fight against the authority of God.

But when a man takes a Bible into his hand, without a preconceived scheme in his head, and though he may make use of systems to secure himself from inconsistencies, yet he puts them not in the place of the holy Scriptures, but resolves to form his body of divinity by the New Testament, and derive all his opinions and practices thence ; he will then find so many expressions, that seem to favour the several contending parties of Christians, that in some points he will perhaps be tempted to doubt of all opinions, and sometimes have much ado to secure himself from the danger of eternal scepticism. When in any doubtful point his judgment is led to a determination, it is always with great caution, and by slow degrees. He is not carried by violence to any dogmatical conclusion ; he is modest in his assertions, and gentle towards all, whose judgment and conscience have determined them another way, because he met with so many probable arguments on their side, in the time of his dubitation and inquiry, that had almost fixed his opinion the same way too.

If I may be permitted to speak of myself, I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience in some great points of religion, I resolved to seek a determination of my thoughts from the Epistles of St Paul, and especially in that weighty doctrine of justi-



fication ; I perused his letter to the Romans in the original, with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together ; first without consulting any commentator, and afterwards called in the assistance of the best critics and interpreters. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind. I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones, I met with some expressions of the Apostle that swayed me towards one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way ; and it was no easy matter to maintain my judgment in an equal poise, till some just and weighty argument gave the determination ; so many crossing notions, perplexing difficulties, and seeming repugnancies lay in my way, that I most heartily bless the divine goodness, that enabled me at last to surmount them all, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness which is not originally his own.

From my own experiment I can easily guess, what confounding intricacies of thought others pass through in their honest searches after truth. These conflicts did exceedingly enlarge my soul, and stretched my charity to a vast extent. I see, I feel, and am assured that several men may be very sincere, and yet entertain notions in divinity all widely different. I confess now and then some opinions, or some unhappy occurrences are

ready to narrow and confine my affections again, if I am not watchful over myself; but I pray God to preserve upon my heart a strong and lasting remembrance of those days and those studies, whereby he laid within me the foundation of so broad a charity.

V. Fifthly, another cause of uncharitableness is a *want of reflection on the grounds of our own opinions*. We should be more just to ourselves, and more gentle to others, if we did but impartially review the reasons why we first embraced our several principles and practices.

Perhaps it was education determined most of them, then let us chide ourselves severely for building upon so careless and slight a bottom. Or let us be civil to the greatest part of mankind, who came by all their principles the same way. Perhaps we were led into particular notions by the authority of persons whom we reverence or love; then we should not upbraid our neighbours, that have been influenced into different sentiments by the same springs. Perhaps we have felt interest sometimes ready to bias our thoughts, and give us a secret inclination or aversion to a party; let us then pity the frailty of human nature, and have compassion upon men whose judgments are exposed to so mean a bribery, and sometimes have been warped aside from the truth. Or finally, perhaps it was deep meditation, a daily search into Scripture, and fervent prayer were the methods by which we pursued knowledge, and established our principles upon solid reason. Let us

then be so charitable to those whom we contend with, as to suppose they sought after truth the same way, and then our contentions will have less fire and spleen in them, less of clamour and indignation against those that differ from us.

The true reason why we kindle our anger against our christian brethren, that are not entirely of our party is, because we not only have the vanity to fancy ourselves always in the right, and them in the wrong; but we judge their consciences and their sincerity too, that they did not come honestly and fairly by their principles, while we never consider how we ourselves came by our own.

VI. But there are still more ways to arrive at this uncharitable temper. I must proceed to sixthly; which is a common method, and thus to be performed. If we will but *trace the principles of those that dissent from us, through all the length of remote and feeble consequences, and be sure to find some terrible absurdity at the end of them*, we shall not easily maintain our charity. O how often do we put their opinions upon the rack! We torture every joint and article of them, until we have forced them to confess some formidable errors, which their authors never knew or dreamed of. Thus the original notions appear with a frightful aspect, and the sectators of them grow to be the object of our abhorrence, and have forfeited their right to every grain of our charity.

Evangelillo believes that Christ Jesus has completely answered the demands of the law in order to our justification, and that in the room and stead of all believers. Nomineus hears this doctrine, and thus begins his chain of severe and false deductions; then, saith he, the law has no power to demand obedience of us; then we are not to be charged with sin, though we break the law hourly and profanely; then we may contemn all the commands, sport with the threatenings, and defy God the lawgiver and the avenger. He proceeds then to pronounce Evangelillo a wicked Antinomian, and in the name of the Lord "*delivers him up to Satan, that he may learn not to blaspheme.*" Evangelillo, on the other hand, (who has been well instructed in the way of salvation, and has learned the duties of faith and hope, but is not yet so well improved in the charity of the Gospel,) hears Nomineus preaching up repentance and sincere obedience, as the conditions of our justification and acceptance with God to eternal life. He smites his breast with his hand, and cries, surely this man knows no use of Christ in our religion, he makes void his righteousness and his death, he is a mere Legalist, a Papist, a rank Socinian, he "preaches another Gospel, and though he were an angel from heaven let him be accursed." Thus when men dress up their neighbours in all the strained consequences of their opinions, with a malicious pleasure they pursue this thread of argument, they impose horrid conclusions, which can never be drawn from their doctrines, and never leave the pursuit

till they have pushed each other to blasphemy and damnation.

Whereas if the doctrines and the persons now mentioned were put into the balances of truth and charity, perhaps the principles of *Evangelillo* would be found to have most weight of Scripture on their side, and *Nomineus* more of the fair shows of reasoning. But neither the one would be found to throw Christ out of his religion, nor the other to make void the law. And both of their lives would appear shining in holiness, but that they want the bright garments of charity.

VII. Let me name a seventh spring of this uncharitable humour; and that is, *when we magnify circumstantial differences into substantial ones, and make every punctilio of our own scheme a fundamental point*, as though all the law and the Prophets hung upon it, as though it were the ground and pillar of all the truth in the Gospel. *Crucius* will not allow his dissenting neighbour to be a member of the christian church, because he separates from the modes of worship in the Church of England; he cannot believe him to be a friend to Christ crucified, because he refuses to have his child baptized with the airy sign of the cross. Again, the dissenting neighbour pronounces *Crucius* to be a mere formalist, and to have nothing of the spirit of God in him, because he seeks not much to obtain the gifts of the spirit, and scarce ever addresses himself to God in prayer without the assistance of a form.

Sabbaptes, that lives within two doors of them, will not believe either of his neighbours to be a Christian, because they have never been plunged under water, that is, in his sense they were never baptised. And both of them in requital agree to call Sabbaptes a Jew, because he worships only on a Saturday. Whereas the all knowing God looks down into all their hearts, beholds the graces that his spirit hath wrought there, owns them all for his children and the disciples of his son, though they are not yet perfect in love. They have all one common God and Father, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one spirit of prayer, one baptism, though they quarrel so bitterly about times, and modes, and forms.

It is a very uncharitable practice to think, that a man can never journey safely to heaven unless his hat and shoes be of the same colour with ours, unless he tread the very track of our feet, and his footsteps too be of the same size. It is a censorious and perverse fancy to pronounce a man no Christian, because every thought of his soul, and all the atoms of his brain are not just ranged in the same posture with mine. How ridiculously unreasonable is it for a man of brown hair, to shut his brother out from the rank and species of men, and call him an ox or a lion, because his locks are black or yellow. I am persuaded there is a breadth in the narrow road to heaven, and persons may travel more than seven abreast in it. And though they do not trace precisely the same track, yet all look to the same Saviour Jesus, and all arrive at the same common salvation.

And though their names may be crossed out of the records of a particular church on earth, where charity fails, yet they will be found written in the Lamb's book of life, which is a record of eternal love, and shall forever be joined to the fellowship of the catholic church in heaven.

VIII. This iniquity of uncharitableness has more springs, than there are streams or branches belonging to the great river of Egypt; and it is as fruitful of serpents and monsters too. Itself is a Hydra of many heads; I have drawn seven of them out at length into open light, that they may be cut off forever. But there are others still remaining as full of fire and infection. Shall I mention an eighth here, the *applause of a party, and the advance of selfinterest*? Have we never observed what a mighty prevalence this has over the hearts and tongues of men, and inflames them with malice against their neighbours? They assault every different opinion with rage and clamour. They rail at the persons of all other parties, to ingratiate themselves with their own; and when they find their account in it, their tongues are sharpened as drawn swords; they fight for honour like young volunteers, or like the Switzers for pay. When they tear away men from their habitations, cast them into noisome prisons, and put to death the ministers of the Gospel, they boast, like Jehu when he slew the priests of Baal, *come and see my zeal for the Lord*. And as he designed hereby to establish the kingdom in his own hands, so they to maintain the preferments and

possessions, as well as the reputation they had acquired among their own sect. But ah! how little do they think of the wounds, that Jesus the Lord receives by every bitter reproach they cast on his followers! Nor will it be found a sufficient reason for the persecution of them one day, that they did not conform to human inventions.

The Jansenists in France have made some reformation in the doctrines of popery, and they have been sometimes traduced for approaching the tenets of Calvin. They have been in danger of being degraded and losing their spiritual dignities, and they are pushed on by this fear and ambition, to write at every turn some severe invectives against the Calvinists, to show that themselves are true sons of that uncharitable church of Rome.

Sicco has lately departed from a Baptist society, and he hardly thinks himself sufficiently come out of the water, till he is kindled into a flame against all those that baptise by immersion; he rails at his former brethren, to make the Presbyterian and Independent churches believe that he is a true convert. How art thou mistaken, poor Sicco, to attempt this method of caressing thy new acquaintance? For they had rather receive a Baptist into their fellowship, whose faith and holiness are conspicuous in his life, than open their doors to an uncharitable wretch, that proves his conversion only by the change of an opinion, and placing his religion in railing.



Acerbion has left the communion of his father, and is become an ecclesiastic of high note in a more powerful and splendid church. He seldom puts a volume into the press without sourness and hard words in it, against the society which he has forsaken. His pen is dipt in gall daily, and he grows old in malice and censure. It is pity he should so far expose the church to which he now belongs, as to think that she will esteem him a more dutiful son, by how much the less charity he has for his dissenting brethren.

And I am sorry also, that there should be a church in Great Britain, which has devoted Christians to the devil for little differences, and has exposed them to tedious and sharp sufferings for refusing to submit to particular gestures in worship and airy signs, for wearing a short garment in prayer in the place of a long one, or black instead of white; and some of her sons have delighted to execute these censures, when they have found much gain arising from this severe godliness. I could wish she had always exercised the same charity to weak consciences, that she does to slender purses; for she allows a christian liberty to "poor beneficed men and curates, not being able to provide themselves long gowns, that they may go in short ones."

IX. A ninth spring of this uncharitable practice is, *fixing upon some necessary and special point in Christianity, and setting it up in opposition to the rest, or at best in opposition to some one of the rest.*

“I have long observed,” says an ingenious writer, “that christians of different parties have been eagerly laying hold on particular parts of the system of divine truths, and have been contending about them as if *each* had been *all*; or as if the separation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preservation of the body, instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence, and to maintain the honour and usefulness of each apart; whereas their honour, as well as usefulness, seems to me to lie much in their connexion. And suspicions have often arisen betwixt the respective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreasonable and absurd, as if all the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured, as a contrivance to sink the rest.” Thus far Dr Doddridge in a late preface.

And I think we may as well borrow the similitude expressly from the Scripture itself, 1 Cor. xii. 14. “The body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, is it therefore not of the body?” And how ridiculous would it be if we should suppose the “ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? And if they were all one member, where were the body? The eye cannot say unto the head, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

In the same manner, *repentance, faith, and love* are three necessary graces or virtues that go to make up a Christian; and I might cite several texts of Scripture, where each of these three are made necessary to Christianity. Is it not therefore a most unreasonable thing to set up either repentance, faith or love so high, as though the whole of Christianity was contained in it, when it is evident that nothing else can make a Christian but such a faith as brings with it repentance and good works, or holiness of life, or such a love as produces obedience and good works, which must be the effect of this faith?

In Christianity “nothing avails but such a faith as works by love” unto all holiness, Gal. v. 6. “Repent and believe the Gospel,” was the first preaching of Christ and his Apostles, Mark i. 15. And in other places, faith is indispensably coupled with repentance, Acts iii. 19. xx. 21. Without repentance our sins will not be forgiven us. Without faith in Jesus Christ we have no interest in his salvation. True faith must be such as “purifies the heart,” Acts xv. 9; and produces good works as the necessary evidences to prove our faith true, James ii. 17, 18.

What a strange sort of monstrous Christian would this be, who pretended to much faith, but had no love nor repentance? And as monstrous would that pretender be, who had love or repentance without faith. As “God hath set the members of the body, every one of them as it hath pleased him,” so has he appointed *faith, repentance, and love* to fulfil their several offices in the christian

life. What a piece of madness therefore is it, and high inconsistency to separate those things, which God hath joined in his Gospel? Or to preach or paraphrase very long, and talk very much upon either one of these, so as to hinder that due respect that is to be paid to the other two? There is no man is or can be a true believer in Christ, if he has not *repentance* and *love*, producing good works, as well as that *faith*, which is necessary to make a Christian. Let us take heed therefore, lest we give occasion, by any of our discourses, to exalt one of these virtues or graces to the prejudice of the rest, for the utter loss of either of them will destroy all our pretences to Christianity.

When Solfido has formed one of his Christians exactly agreeable to the shape and humour of his own imagination, and dressed him up in all the feathers of strict orthodoxy, that he can find in the severest writers, and by a motto written upon his forehead has called him the *man of faith*, I am at a loss to know what christian church would receive him into their communion, when he neither professes *repentance*, nor *holiness*, nor true *love* to God or man. It has indeed some of the appearances of a *christian* stature, but it is a man without feet or hands for walking or moving, a man without life or activity to run the christian race, or to do anything for God in the world. What glory can our Lord Jesus Christ receive from such a useless figure? What honour can such an imperfect image possibly bring to the Gospel; or what service can he be of in the world or in the church?

X. The most common cause of uncharitableness, and the last I shall mention, is, that *a great part of the professors of our holy religion, make their heads the chief seat of it, and scarce ever suffer it to descend and warm their hearts.* Jesus the Saviour has been discovered to them in a good degree of outward light, but has never been revealed in them with power, nor their souls changed by divine grace into the image of the Gospel. While they boast of their orthodox faith they forget their christian love.

Stellino has stuck his brain all over with notions, and fancies his higher sphere sufficiently illuminated for the conduct of mankind, that is round about him, and beneath him. But this set of notions is like a winter night overhung with stars; bright and shining, but very cold. Natural affections have no room in his soul; it is too much spiritualized with opinions and doctrines. His divinity lies all in his understanding, and the common duties of humanity scarce ever employ his tongue or his hands.

If a man does but profess every tittle of his creed, and believe just as Stellino believes, he is declared fit for holy communion; and if he will but dispute warmly for the hard words that distinguish his scheme, and can pronounce Shibboleth well, he shall not be adjudged to death or damnation, but joined heartily to the fellowship of the saints, though his flaming immoralities proclaim him a son of Satan. Satan himself has perhaps a more accurate and nice skill of the controversies of divinity;

than the best of our professors and doctors have arrived at; but his pride and malice are chains of darkness, and make a devil of him in spite of all his knowledge; yet Stellino affects too near a resemblance to Lucifer, that fallen son of the morning.

Vices that are odious to humannature, and wild licentiousness of a bitter tongue, which destroy all civil society, are very little faults in his opinion, when put into the balance with orthodoxy and zeal. If my conversation among men be blameless and honourable; if my practice consist of virtue and piety; if I profess a solemn faith in Christ the eternal word, the only begotten Son of God, who came into the flesh, who died to make a true atonement for the sins of men, and testify my unfeigned subjection to him, and declare the grounds of my hope; yet I must not be admitted to the special parts of worship where Stellino presides, because I am not arrived at his degree of light, and differ from his expressions a little, when I explain the words *justification* and the *covenant* of grace. His lips are ever full of declamation and controversy, and he harangues copiously upon the most affecting points of our religion; he talks much of the amazing condescensions of divine mercy, and of the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man; but it has not yet taught him love to his fellow creatures, nor kindness towards his brethren.

. Such another Christian is Misander; he reverses the duties of Christianity, which St Paul describes, *he speaks evil* of all *men* but his own party, he is a *brawler*, and

*ungenteel, shewing meekness* unto none ; and while he pretends, “that the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared” unto him, he *lives still in malice and envy*, and wears the visible characters of the men of heathenism, “*hateful and hating one another*,” Tit. ii. 11, 12. Tit. iii. 2, 3, 4. He flourishes and enlarges upon the gracious qualities of our Redeemer, our great *High Priest*, who is, “touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;” yet himself has not learnt from so glorious an example to “have compassion of them, that are ignorant and out of the way ;” but rather being exalted in his own knowledge, he condemns “his weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died.” Take thy Bible, O vain man, and read a few lines in the 8th chapter of St Paul’s first Epistle to Corinth. “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth ; and if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know ; but if any man love God, the same is known of him.” And St John will assure thee, “that he that loveth not his brother knoweth not God, and if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar,” 1 John iv. 8, 20.

Yet let not any think that I advance charity so high, as to place it in the room of knowledge and faith, or to make it a selfsufficient ground for our admittance into heaven at last ; nor can I suppose it alone to be a sufficient plea for a reception into any visible church of Christ on earth. A confession of the name of Jesus, with the most important and most necessary articles of h.s bless-

ed religion, a declaration of my personal faith or trust in him, together with a solemn dedication of myself unto the Lord, may be justly required of me by that christian society into which I desire admittance. In default of these the biggest instances of charity will never constitute me a Christian. "Except ye believe that I am he," saith our Saviour, "ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. "If a man strive for a prize, yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully;" that is, according to the methods prescribed in the Gospel, the knowledge and the faith of the Son of God, 2 Tim. ii. 5, and the sentence of our Lord is dreadful and peremptory. "He that beliveth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. But without charity my faith can never be true, for it must be such "a faith as worketh by love," and discovers itself by the "fruits of the spirit, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 6. 22.

Thus far have we traced the vice of uncharitableness in many of the properties that belong to it, and the cause of it, and many instances in which it discovers itself in the world, and in the church; and it appears a very shameful vice, and opposite to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

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ON THE CHOICE  
OF  
OUR RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

BY

*Gen*  
JOHN LE CLERC.



# ON THE CHOICE

OF OUR

## RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

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BEING THE FIRST TEN SECTIONS OF LE CLERC'S TREATISE  
SUBJOINED TO HIS EDITION OF GROTIUS'S "TRUTH OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION."

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### SECTION I.

*We must inquire, amongst what Christians the true  
Doctrine of Christ flourisheth most at this Time.*

WHOEVER reads over the Books of the New Testament, with a desire to come at the knowledge of the truth, and does not want judgment, will not be able to deny, but that every one of the marks of truth, alleged by Hugo Grotius, in his second and third Books, are to be found there. Wherefore, if he has any concern for a blessed immortality, he will apprehend it to be his duty, to embrace what is proposed to him in those books as matter of belief; to do what is commanded, and to expect what he is there taught to hope for. Otherwise, if any one should deny that he doubts of the truth of the Christian religion, and at the same time thinks the doctrines, precepts, and promises of it are not fit to be believed or obeyed in every particular; such an one

would be inconsistent with himself, and manifestly shew that he is not a sincere Christian. Now this is one of the precepts of Christ and his Apostles, that we should profess ourselves the disciples of Christ before men, if we would have him own us for his, when he shall pass sentence on the quick and dead at the last day ; and if we do not, as we have denied him to be our master before men, so he also, in that last assembly of mankind, will deny us to be his disciples before God. For Christ would not have those that believe on him to be his disciples privately ; as if they were ashamed of his doctrine, or as if they valued the kindnesses, threats, or punishments of men, more than his precepts, and the promises of eternal life ; but be Christians openly and before all the world, that they may invite other men to embrace the true religion, and render back to God that life, which they received from him, in the most exquisite torments, if it so seem good to him ; whilst they openly profess that they prefer his precepts above all things. And thus St Paul teaches us, that if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our heart that God hath raised him from the dead, we shall be saved ; *For, says he, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with thy mouth confession is made unto salvation ; for the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* Which being thus, it is his duty, who thinks the Christian religion to be true, to discover and profess boldly and without fear, this his sincere opinion, upon all occasions that offer themselves.

And it is further necessary for him to inquire, if there be any of the same opinion with himself, and to maintain a particular peace and friendship with them ; for Christ tells us, this is one mark his disciples are to be known by, if they love one another, and perform all acts of love and kindness towards each other. Moreover, he exhorts them to have congregations *in his name*, that is, such as should be called Christian ; and promises that he would be present there, where two or three are met together upon that account ; by this means, besides the mutual love, and strict friendship of Christians united into one society, there is also a provision made for preserving their doctrines ; which can hardly continue, if every one has a private opinion to himself, and does not declare the sense of his mind to another, unless for his own advantage ; for those things that are concealed, are by degrees forgotten, and come in time to be quite extinguished ; but Christ would have his doctrine, and the churches which profess it, be perpetual, that it may not cease to be beneficial to mankind.

Wherefore, whoever derives his knowledge of the Christian religion from the New Testament, and thinks it true ; such an one ought to make profession of it, and to join himself with those of the like profession. But because there is not at this time, neither was there formerly, one sort of men only, or one congregation of such as are gathered together *in the name of Christ* ; we are not therefore presently to believe that he is a true Christian, who desires to be called by that holy

name ; neither ought we to join ourselves, without examination, to any assembly who style themselves Christians. We must consider, above all things, whether their doctrines agree with that form of sound words, which we have entertained in our mind, from an attentive reading of the New Testament ; otherwise it may happen that we may esteem that a Christian congregation, which is no further Christian than in name. It is therefore the part of a prudent man, not to enter himself into any congregation, at least for a continuance ; unless it be such, in which he perceives that doctrine established, which he truly thinks to be the Christian doctrine ; lest he should put himself under a necessity of saying or doing something contrary, to what he thinks delivered and commanded by Christ.



## SECTION II.

*We are to join ourselves with those, who are most worthy the Name of Christians.*

Amongst Christians that differ from each other, and not only differ, but (to their shame !) condemn one another, and with cruel hatred banish them their society ; to agree to any of them without examination, or, according to their order, to condemn others without consideration ; shews a man not only to be imprudent, but very rash and unjust. That congregation which rejects, though but in part, the true religion, (a representation of which he has formed in his mind,) and

condemns him that believes it ; cannot be thought by such an one, a truly Christian congregation in all things ; nor can it prevail with him, to condemn every man which that church shall esteem worthy to be condemned, and cast out of the society of Christians. Wherefore a wise and honest man, ought above all things to examine, in these dissensions amongst Christians, who are they, which best deserve the holy name of disciples of Christ, and to adhere to them. If any one should ask, what we are required to do by the Christian religion, supposing there were no such Christian society at all, amongst whom the true doctrine of Christ seems to be taught, and amongst whom there is not a necessity laid upon us of condemning some doctrine, which we judge to be true. In this case, he who apprehends these errors, ought to endeavour to withdraw others from them ; in doing of which, he must use the greatest candour, joined with the highest prudence and constancy ; lest he offend men without doing them an advantage, or lest any hopes of bringing them to truth and moderation, be too suddenly cast off. In the mean time, we are to speak modestly and prudently, what we think to be the truth ; nor should any one be condemned by the judgment of another, as infected with error, who seems to think right. God has never forsaken, nor never will forsake the Christian name, so far, as that there shall remain no true Christians ; or at least none such as cannot be brought back into the true way ; with whom we may maintain a stricter society, if others will not

return to a more sound opinion ; and openly withdraw ourselves from the obstinate, (which yet we ought not to do, without having tried all other means to no purpose ;) if it be not allowed you to speak your opinion fairly and modestly among them, and to forbear condemning those whom you think are not to be condemned. The Christian religion forbids us speaking contrary to our mind, and falsifying and condemning the innocent ; nor can he be unacceptable to God, who, out of respect and admiration of those divine precepts, can endure anything rather than that they should be broke. Such a disposition of mind, arising from a sense of our duty, and a most ardent love of God, cannot but be highly well-pleasing to him.

Wherefore amongst Christians, who differ from each other, we are to examine which of them all think the most right ; nor are we ever to condemn any but such as seem to us worthy to be condemned, after a full examination of the matter ; and we are to adhere to those who do not require any doctrines to be believed, which are esteemed by us to be false, nor any to be condemned which we think to be true. If we cannot obtain this of any Christian society, we, together with those who are of the same opinion with ourselves, ought to separate from them all, that we betray not the truth, and utter a falsity.



## SECTION III.

*They are most worthy the Name of Christians, who in the purest Manner of all, profess the doctrine, the truth of which hath been proved by Grotius.*

But it is a question of no small importance, and not easily to be resolved, who of all the societies of the present Christians, have the truest opinions, and are most worthy of that name by which they are called. All the Christian churches, as well as those who have long since separated from the Romish church, as the Romish church itself, do every one of them claim this to themselves; and if we lay aside all the reasons, we ought no more to give credit to the one than to the other; for it were a very foolish thing, to suffer such a choice to be determined by chance, and to decide all controversies, as it were, by the cast of a die.

Now since Grotius has not proved the truth of the particular opinions of any present sect of Christians, but only of that religion which was taught mankind by Christ and his Apostles; it follows, that that sect of Christians is to be preferred before all others, which does most of all defend those things, which Christ and his Apostles taught. In a word, that is in every particular truly the Christian religion, which, without any mixture of human invention, may be wholly ascribed to Christ as the author. To this agree all those arguments of truth, which are laid down in the second book of *The Truth of the Christian Religion*; nor do they agree to any other, any further than it agrees with that.

If any one adds to, or diminishes from, the doctrine delivered by Christ ; the more he adds or diminishes, so much the farther he goes from the truth. Now when I speak of the *doctrine of Christ*, I mean by it, the doctrine which all Christians are clearly agreed upon to be the doctrine of Christ ; that is, which according to the judgment of all Christians, is either expressly to be found in the books of the New Testament, or is by necessary consequence, to be deduced from them only. As to those opinions, which as some Christians think, were delivered by word of mouth, by Christ and his Apostles, and derived to posterity in a different method, namely, either by tradition ; which was done by speaking only ; or which were preserved by some rite, as they imagine, and not set down in writing till a great while after ; I shall pass no other judgment upon them here, but only this, that all Christians are not agreed upon them, as they are upon the books of the New Testament. I will not say they are false, unless they are repugnant to right reason and revelation ; but only that they are not agreed about the original of them, and therefore they are controverted amongst Christians, who in other respects agree in those opinions, the truth of which Grotius has demonstrated ; for no wise man will allow us to depend upon a thing as certain, so long as it appears uncertain to us ; especially if it be a matter of great moment.

## SECTION IV.

*Concerning the Agreement and Disagreement of  
Christians.*

Though the controversies amongst Christians be very sharp, and managed with great heat and animosity, so that we may hear complaints made on all sides, of very obvious things being denied by some of the contending parties; yet notwithstanding this, there are some things so evident, that they are all agreed in them. And it is no mean argument of the truth of such, that they are allowed of by the common consent of those who are most set upon contention, and most blinded by passion. I do not mean by this, that all other things about which there is any contention, are doubtful or obscure, because all Christians are not agreed in them. It may easily happen that that may be obscure to some, which would be very plain, if they were not hindered by passion; but it is hardly possible that the fiercest adversaries, who are most eager in disputing, should agree about an obscure point.

First then, all Christians now alive, are agreed concerning the number and truth of the books of the New Testament; and though there be some small controversies among learned men about some Epistles of the Apostles, this is no great matter; and they all acknowledge, that there is nothing but truth contained in them, and that the Christian doctrine is not at all altered, either by keeping or rejecting them. And this consent

is of no small moment in a discourse about the undoubted original of a divine revelation under the new covenant. For all other records or footsteps of ancient revelation, that have been preserved according to the opinions of some, are called in question by others.

Further, Christians are agreed in many articles of faith, which they embrace, as things to be believed; practised, and hoped for. For instance, all who have any understanding, believe, (I shall mention only the principal heads here,) 1. That there is one God, eternal, all powerful, infinitely good and holy, in a word, endued with all the most excellent attributes, without the least mixture of imperfection; that the world and all things contained in it, and consequently mankind, were created by this same God; and that by him all things are governed and directed with the highest wisdom. 2. That Jesus Christ is the only Son of the same God; that he was born at Bethlehem, of the Virgin Mary, without the knowledge of a man, in the latter part of the life of Herod the great, in the reign of Augustus Cæsar; that he was afterwards crucified, and died in the reign of Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that his life is truly related in the history of the Gospel; that he was therefore sent from the Father, that he might teach men the way to salvation, redeem them from their sins, and reconcile them to God by his death; and that this his mission was confirmed by innumerable miracles; that he died, as I before said, and rose again, and, after he had been very often seen by many who had discoursed with him, and handled him, he was

taken up into heaven, where he now reigns, and from whence he will one day return, to pass a final judgment according to the laws of the Gospel, upon those who were then alive, and upon all them that are dead, when they shall be raised out of their graves; that all the things that he taught, are to be believed, and all that he commanded are to be obeyed, whether they relate to the worship of God, or to temperance in restraining our passions, or to charity to be exercised towards others; that nothing could be appointed more holy, more excellent, more advantageous, and more agreeable to human nature than these precepts; however, that all men, (Jesus only excepted,) violate them, and cannot arrive at salvation, but through the mercy of God. 3. That there is a Holy Ghost, who inspired the Apostles of Jesus Christ, worked miracles to recommend them, and inclines the minds of pious men constantly to obey God, and supports them in the afflictions of life; that we are to give the same credit, and in all things to obey this spirit speaking by the Apostles, as we do the Father and the Son. 4. That the Christian church owes its original and preservation, from the days of Christ to this time, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that all they who believe these things, and observe the precepts of the Gospel, shall obtain mercy of God, whereby they shall be made partakers of the resurrection, (if they be dead when Christ shall come,) and of a happy life to eternity; on the contrary, all they who have diminished from the faith of the Gospel, and have not observed its

precepts, shall rise, (if they be dead,) to be punished, and their punishment shall be eternal death. 5. Lastly, That Christians ought to profess all these things, both at their baptism, in which we declare that we will lead a life free from the filthiness of iniquity, according to the direction of the Gospel; and also at the Lord's Supper, in which we celebrate the death of Christ, according to his command, till he comes; and shew that we are willing to be esteemed his disciples, and the brethren of those who celebrate it in like manner; moreover, that those rites, if they are observed by us, as is reasonable, and are celebrated with a religious mind, convey heavenly grace and the divine spirit to us.

These things, and others that are necessarily connected with them, (for it is not to our present purpose to mention them all particularly,) all Christians believe; nor is there any other difference but only this, that some add many other things to these, whereby they think the foregoing doctrines ought to be explained or enlarged with additions; and those such, as they imagine were delivered to posterity, not by the writings of the Apostles, but by the tradition and custom of the church, or by the writings of latter ages. Concerning these additions, I shall say nothing more than what I before advised; that Christians are not agreed upon them, as they are upon the doctrines now explained, which are put beyond all manner of doubt by their own plainness, if we allow but the authority of the Holy Scripture, which no Christian in his senses can refuse.

If any one weighs the arguments, by which the truth of the Christian religion is proved, with these doctrines in his view; he will observe, (and if it be well observed, it will be of great use,) that all the force of the argument is employed about these things, and not about those points which divide the Christian world, as was before hinted.

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SECTION V.

*Whence every one ought to learn the Knowledge of the Christian Religion.*

In this agreement and disagreement amongst Christians, prudent men will judge it most safe, to take their knowledge of the Christian religion from the fountain, which is not in the least suspected, and whose streams all confess to be pure and undefiled. And this fountain is not the creed or the confession of faith of any particular church, but only the books of the New Testament, which all acknowledge to be genuine. I confess some Christians do sometimes say, that those books cannot be understood but by the doctrine of their church; but others again deny it; and, to mention but this one thing, that opinion is very suspicious, which depends only on the testimony of those that affirm it; and they such, whose chief interest it is, that it should seem true. Others say, that there is need of the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit, not only in order to the belief of the Scripture, which may without any

great difficulty be allowed, but also in order to understand the meaning of the words contained in it ; which I do not see how it can be proved ; but we will grant this also, provided they will acknowledge that all men, who read the books of the New Testament with a religious mind, intent upon the truth, are afforded this Spirit by the goodness of God ; there is no need of contending for anything more than this. Every one, therefore, may wisely and safely gather his knowledge of the Christian religion from these books ; yet making use of those helps, that are necessary or profitable for the understanding of such books ; which we will not now inquire after.

Whoever therefore believes, that the revelation of the will of God made by Christ, is faithfully related in the books of the New Testament, such an one must of necessity embrace all things which he there meets with, according as he understands them, as matters of faith, practice and hope ; for whoever believes in Christ, ought to receive with a religious mind everything which he thinks comes from him ; he cannot defend himself with any excuse, whereby to admit some and reject others, of those things which he acknowledges to come from Christ. And such are those doctrines I before explained, and concerning which all Christians, as I said, are agreed.

As to the rest, about which they contest, since they are not so very plain, a religious and pious man may and ought to deliberate concerning them, and withhold



his judgment till they appear more evident to him. For it is very imprudent to admit or reject anything, before it sufficiently appears to be either true or false. Nor is eternal salvation, in the books of the New Testament, promised to any one, who embraces this or that controverted opinion ; but to him who heartily receives in his mind, and expresses in his actions, the sum of the Christian religion, as we have described it.



## SECTION VI.

*Nothing else ought to be imposed upon Christians, but what they can gather from the New Testament.*

This therefore is the only thing that can justly be imposed upon all Christians, viz. that they embrace whatever they think is contained in the books of the New Testament, and obey those things which they find there commanded, and abstain from those things which are there forbidden ; if anything further be required of them as necessary, it is without any authority. For would any fair judge require a Christian to believe a doctrine came from Christ which he does not find in the only faithful and undoubted records, in which all are agreed the revelation of Christ is derived down to us ? Let other doctrines be true ; let us take this for granted a little while ; they cannot however be esteemed as true by him, who, amongst the different sorts of Christians, follows the middle way, and allows of no certain record

of the revelation of Christ, but the books of the New Testament. Whilst he believes this, nothing else can justly be required of him ; and he will believe this, till it shall be made appear to him by plain arguments, that the knowledge of Christianity is safely to be had somewhere else, which I believe will never be done.

If any one, therefore, attempts to take away from Christians the books of the New Testament, or to add to them such things as do not appear to be true, we are by no means to hearken to such an one ; because he requires that of us, which no prudent man will allow, viz. that we should believe that which we are not certain of, or neglect that which all own to be the sure record of the revelation of the Gospel. There is no need of examining all controversies singly, and one by one ; which would be an endless thing, and cannot be done but by very learned men, who have abundance of leisure. Whoever imposes anything upon us, as necessary to be believed, which we cannot believe, he drives us from himself ; because belief cannot be extorted by force ; nor will any one who fears God, and is a lover of truth, suffer himself to profess what he does not believe, for the sake of another.

But they who differ from this, object, that if every one be left to their own liberty, in judging of the meaning of the books of the New Testament, there will be as many religions as there are men, and truth, which is but one, will immediately be oppressed by a multitude of errors. But I think, that before an opinion,

which is established upon solid arguments, be opposed by objections, the foundation upon which it is built ought to be overthrown ; because so long as that remains firm, the whole superstructure raised upon it cannot be shaken, as we see here. For if any inconvenience should follow from what has been said, it is nevertheless true, till it be made appear not to be fixed on a firm bottom. But to pass by this now ; it is false that the revelation of the New Testament is so obscure, that the sum of the Christian religion cannot be truly learned from it, by any one of a sound mind, who is desirous of truth. It is evident from experience, that it may be truly learned from thence ; for all Christians, as has been already shewn, agree in the principal parts of it ; which was observed by Grotius. We have no regard here, to a few simple or wicked men ; since whole societies of Christians, who in other respects, out of their too great eagerness of contention, are apt to differ from one another, and to run into the contrary extremes, are here agreed.

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SECTION VII.

*The Providence of God, in preserving the Christian Doctrine, is very wonderful.*

In this particular, as in numberless others, which relate to the government of human affairs, the divine providence is very wonderful ; which, notwithstanding

so many differences, as were of old, and are at this day amongst Christians, yet hath preserved the books of the New Testament entire, even to our times; that the Christian doctrine may be recovered out of them, as often as it happens to be corrupted. Nor has it only delivered down to us this treasure entire; but also, in the midst of the hottest differences, has so secured the Christian doctrine itself, that the sum of religion has never been forgotten amongst Christians.

No inconsiderable number of Christians at this day contend, that many errors, in former ages, crept by degrees in amongst the sects of Christians, which, when others denied in the sixteenth century after the birth of Christ, that famous separation in the *west* was made upon that account, by which Christianity was divided into two parts, not very unequal. Yet in those ages, (whose errors are reprov'd by that part of the Christians, which made the separation I now mentioned, and whose faults were highly aggravated by both sides, and that not without grounds,) the sum of the Christian religion, before drawn up by us, was all along maintained. There is no age so thick clouded with ignorance and vice, but the forementioned articles of faith may easily be collected from their writings that remain. It must not indeed be dissembled, that many things, foreign and unknown to the books of the New Testament, have been added and thrust into the Christian Theology; whence it is, that the true wheat of the sower, in the Gospel, hath not brought forth so much fruit as it would

otherwise have done, had the ground been cleared of thorns, and hurtful, and unprofitable weeds. Many vices and faults were not only admitted or borne with, but applauded also. Yet was not sound doctrine ever the less safe, whilst the books of the New Testament remained, and whilst Christians were endued with common sense; for by this means, very eminent men were often raised up, who corrected the errors and vices of their age, and ventured to oppose the torrent. Thus according to the promise of Christ, God hindered *the gates of death from prevailing against the church*; that is, did not suffer every society wherein the Christian doctrine was preserved entire, to be extinguished; though sometimes they were blended and obscured with foreign and contrary opinions, and sometimes were more sincere and pure. Wherefore, (to observe this by the way,) unless this doctrine was really sent to us from God, it could never have escaped out of such a deluge of vices and errors, but would, at length, have been overwhelmed by the changeableness and folly of human nature, and have entirely perished.

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SECTION VIII.

*An Answer to that Question, Why God permits Differences and Errors to arise amongst Christians?*

Perhaps some may here object against what has been said, that the divine providence would have better consulted the preservation of the Christian doctrine, if it

had prevented the errors that are and have been amongst Christians, and maintained truth and constant agreement, which is the companion of it, amongst them, by its omnipotence. But it is not for us to instruct God how he ought to direct himself, in the government of human affairs, that they might be better. On the contrary, it is our duty to think that God had very wise reasons for suffering what he did suffer, though we cannot so much as guess at what they are. But if any probable reasons can be given for the things that are done, we ought to believe that God permits those things, which daily come to pass, to be done for these or more weighty reasons.

To make a conjecture from the reasons of things, we are above all things sure, that the design of God was to create men free, and to suffer them to continue so to the end ; that is, not so good, that they must necessarily continue good always ; nor so bad, as that they must of necessity submit to vice ; but mutable, so as that they might pass from vice to virtue, and again from virtue to vice ; and this with more or less ease, according as they had a longer or shorter time given up themselves to virtue or vice. Such we see the Hebrew people of old were, and such were the Christians afterwards. Neither of them were drawn by an irresistible force either to virtue or vice ; but only restrained by laws, which proposed rewards to the good, and punishment to the bad ; to which were added, by the divine providence, various incitements to virtue and discouragements from vice ;

but yet neither of them deprived man of his native liberty, whereby he had a power of obeying or disobeying God, as is evident from experience; for there were always good and bad, though the divine laws prescribed virtue, and prohibited vice equally to all. That this would be so amongst Christians, Christ has plainly signified in two parables, the one of the tares which the enemy sowed, after the wheat was sown; the other of the net, which took good and bad fish alike; by which he signified, that there would always be in the church a mixture of good and bad Christians; whence it follows, that he very well saw the evils that would always be in the Christian church. Moreover, Paul tells the Christians, *that there must be sects amongst Christians, that they who are approved may be made manifest.* And indeed, unless there had been differences among Christians concerning doctrine, there had been no room left for choice, and for that sort of virtue, by which truth is preferred to all other things. Therefore even in this particular also, the divine wisdom shines bright; which caused an excellent virtue to flourish out of the midst of the vices of men.

If any one should object here, as some do, that it were better there were no such kind of virtue, than that there should be vices contrary to it, from whence so many horrid crimes, so many calamities, and so great miseries should befall mankind, and such heavy punishment attend them after this life; to this we answer, that these evils were not of such a consideration with

God, that upon their account, he should not give an instance of his power in creating free agents. Unless this had been done, no creature would have believed, that it could have been done before. Nay, God himself would not have been thought to be free, unless he himself had planted this opinion of himself by his omnipotence in the minds of men, which otherwise they never could have conceived from his works. Nor could he have been worshipped, if he had been thought to do, or to have done all things, not out of his free goodness, but by a certain fatal necessity; unless by a fatal worship also, and such an one as is not at all free. The vices and calamities of this or the other life, are not comparable to so great an evil, as the supposing God to be ignorant of anything; for if we find any difficulty about them, we ought to consider that God is most good, just, powerful, and wise, and will not act otherwise than agreeable to his perfections; and will easily find a way to go in it, whereby to clear those things which seem to us to be entangled; and to show to all intelligent creatures, that nothing was done by him, which ought not to have been done. In the mean time, till that day spring, in which all the clouds of our ignorance shall be dispersed, he hath given us such experience of himself, and such instances of his perfections, on the account of which, we may and ought entirely to confide in him, and patiently to wait for what he will have come to pass. More might be said on this matter, but that it would divert us from that end we are tending to, and carry us to what does not belong to this place.



## SECTION IX.

*They profess and teach the Christian Doctrine in the purest Manner of all, who propose Those things only as necessary to be believed, practised, or hoped for, which Christians are agreed in.*

To pass by these things, therefore, and return to the choice of our opinion amongst the different sects of Christians; nothing seems possible to be done more safe and wise, in this state of affairs, than for us to join ourselves with that sect of Christians, which acknowledges the New Testament only for the rule of their faith, without any mixture of human decrees; and who think it sufficient, that every one should learn their from of faith from thence conform their lives to its precepts, and expect the promises which are there made. Which, if it be done sincerely, and without any dissimulation, the end of such a search will be that very form of sound words, which we have made appear to have remained the same, amidst so many and so great storms of errors and dissensions, during the passing of so many ages, and the changes of kingdoms and cities. In it are contained all things, that are necessary to faith and practice; to which, if any one would have any other things added, it may lawfully be done, according to the circumstances of time and place; provided they be not imposed as necessary, which belongs only to the supreme Lawgiver, nor contrary doctrines to those obtruded.

. Christians disposed in the manner we have been speaking of, ought not to submit their neck to the yoke of human opinions, nor to profess they believe what they do not believe ; nor to do that which they cannot approve in their own minds, because they think it contrary to the precepts of Christ. Therefore, wherever that Christian liberty, which I have now mentioned, is not allowed, they must of necessity depart thence ; not as if they condemned all that are of a different opinion from themselves, but because every one is absolutely obliged to follow the light of his own mind, and not that of another's ; and to do that which he judges best to be done, and to avoid that which he thinks to be evil.



## SECTION X.

*All prudent Persons ought to Partake of the Sacrament with those, who require Nothing else of Christians, but what every one finds in the Books of the New Testament.*

Since Christ has appointed two signs or symbols of Christianity, Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; it was not indeed in our power to receive baptism, where we judged the Christian religion to be most pure, because we were baptized very young ; but since we do not come to the other sacrament, till we are of riper age, we may distinguish that society of Christians, in which

we are willing to be partakers of it ; which if we have not already done, we ought to do it now.

There are some who make the sacrament, (which, according to Christ's institution, is a token of that peace and love which is between Christians,) a mark of distinction ; and exclude from it all those, who do not think it safe to submit to any yoke, but what Christ has laid upon them ; or to receive any things as necessary to be believed, practised, or hoped for, but those which they are verily persuaded are contained in the books of the New Testament ; and who are therefore very cautious of admitting any other forms of faith, besides that which we have mentioned. It is but just and reasonable indeed, that we should maintain peace with such men as these ; but for receiving the sacrament upon this condition, that we should embrace any other rule of faith and practice, besides the books of the New Testament, and think all those excluded the church, who will not admit them ; this a religious and prudent man will think very wicked. But all they, who are true lovers of the Gospel, safely may and ought to approach the sacramental table of them, who know no other laws of obtaining eternal salvation, but those laid down by Christ and his Apostles in the books of the Gospel covenant, as every one can understand them. For whoever acknowledges the books of the New Testament for the only rule of faith and practice ; who sincerely conform their lives to that rule ; in a word, who allow of no idola-

try, nor treat others ill, that they may profess they believe certain doctrines, which they do not believe ; all such are received by these, and also invited to this table. It is manifest indeed, that communion cannot be maintained with him, who makes use of force to impose his opinions upon others ; who worships other gods, besides the true God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; or who, by his conversation, shows that he makes light of the precepts of the Gospel ; or who owns any other laws of salvation, than those wrote in the books of the eternal covenant. But he, who behaves himself the direct contrary, is worthy to have all Christians maintain communion with him, and to be preferred to all the rest who are of a different opinion. No mortal man, nay, no angel can impose any new Gospel upon Christians, to be believed by them. Now, according to this Gospel, he is a true disciple of Christ, who from his heart believes his doctrine, and his only, so as to obey it the best he is able, according to the infirmity of this life ; who worships one God, loves his neighbour as himself, and lives temperately in respect to all other things. If anything be diminished from this, the laws of the covenant, which none but God can abate anything of, are maimed. And if anything be added, it is a useless yoke, which none ought to impose on Christians. Such laws can be received from God only, who alone is the determiner of eternal salvation.

Perhaps some may here ask me, by what name these Christian societies, which I have now described, may

be distinguished? But it signifies nothing what denomination they go under. The reader may conceive all churches to be meant, in which, what I have said, is to be found. Wheresoever that only rule of faith, and that liberty which I have described, is, there they may be assured true Christianity is, and they need not inquire for a name, which makes nothing to the purpose. I believe there are many such societies; and I pray the good and great God, that there may be more and more every day; that at length *his kingdom may come* into all the earth, and that mankind may obey it only.

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